#MarinetteMarch2025

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#MarinetteMarch2025

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Summary

Marinette arrives in Paris to attend the Paris School of Art and Design, but it's not just fashion she'll be learning about as she discovers Paris and herself in ways she never thought possible.

Chapter 1

“If your going to be up most of the night, your going to need to fuel up on coffee,” Papa says. Thank goodness for Starbucks coffee, and I give my father a grateful smile.

My family is moving to Paris, where I might have the incredible opportunity of attending a Arts school, and Papa and I are heading out of China tonight, hence the coffee. Also, the deadline for the application is due at midnight, but I have will have plenty of time to submit it on the plane as I have a “cheat sheet” to fill out.

Securing my coffee, I carefully follow Papa through the airport towards our plane. It was hard to say goodbye to everyone in the village, as my family has been running the family bakery since before I was born. Mama still has to close up shop and she’ll join us later.

After I submit my application, I plan on brushing up on my French, as I mostly speak Chinese. I’m shy and clumsy, preferring the company of my sketchpad and colored pencils then people, but I’m bound and determined to make friends at school.

Even in China, the famous fashion designer, Gabriel Agreste is everywhere, and when my parents knew my love of fashion and sewing weren’t going anywhere, they gave me a book of his of simple designs. His wife, Emile, used to model and occasional write articles, but it’s like she’s mysteriously disappeared and their son, Adrien, has taken the face of the brand.

I can’t tell if he’d be nice and someone I could easily be friends with, or would he look down on me a “commoner.” Argh, fashion magazines are great, but why do they have to spin a yarn?

I relieved when we find our seats, and I sip my drink, watching the others follow suit. Once the plane takes off, it’s back to work and tap away furiously as others slumber peacefully, as it’s a evening flight.

“School project?” A kind flight attendant asks, and I smile, pausing my work. I tell her about school and the deadline. “You must be very talented,” she says, handing me my bag of pretzels and cranberry juice. “Good luck!”

When I look at the school's website, the school at times reminds me more of a castle, with it's manicured lawns and posh looking students. I look down at my outfit and sigh. I make most of my own clothes, but compared to how some dress...I shake my head. No, they'll judge you for your skills and talent, not what you wear. Mostly.

At 11:59, I click the "send" button, sighing deeply. Now the waiting begins and I click over to the Translate app, slipping on my headphones and conversing in French.

My eyes grow heavier and heavier, and I need to take a break.

"Marinette, honey?" I mumble the phrase in French for five more minutes, and Papa shakes my shoulder again. "I'd love to honey, but we need to get off the plane." My eyes fly open. "We're in Paris?"

He nods, and I leap up. "Let's go!" Though in this case, "going" means a whole lot of waiting in lines. I'm to nervous to check my e-mail on my phone. If I get in I want to be sitting down and if not….

"More coffee, plus bagels!" Papa beams as he hands me a bag. "I'll eat after I know," I tell him as I open my laptop, my stomach tied up in knots. I hold my breath as I open my email.

"Dear Miss Dupain-Cheng,

Congratulations! You have been selected to attend Paris's School of Art and Design…" the letter went on, but I leaped up doing a "Yeah!"

"You got in?" I nod, and Papa grabs me as we do a impromptu jig. Then he starts crying. "Papa! It's not like your going to have to miss me! I'll be here in Paris!" "But it's a boarding school!"

The school is separated in two, with girls dorms and boys dorms, though if you have a parent or legal Guardian you can live off campus if you so choose. As my shyness hinders me to make friends, I asked to live in the dorms to hopefully make friends. "Remember, until you start school, you'll be living with your grandparents," Papa explains to me as we head to the baggage area.

"Even if it's for a short time, I'll be glad to see them again."

Finally, we reach our rental car, and I grow quiet, hoping to take in the sights of the city. Everything in Paris is huge and beautiful, and I want to sketch right now.

Papa takes me to a small outside bistro, and we chat about my upcoming busy days. I'm about to dig into some fabulous looking spaghetti when I catch him staring at me. "What?" "I'm the proudest Papa in the world, Marinette. And someday, your going to have your name in lights."

Inwardly, I cringe. I've never craved the spotlight, only love and belonging. I nod, keeping my thoughts to myself. "Can I take a walk after I'm done?"

"Of course, but don't forget dessert!"

I find a small park nearby, telling Papa I'll meet him at my grandparents later, though I had to convince him I knew how to use the map. The sunshine is warm on my face, and the fresh breeze calms me down.

It seems like this particular park is a circle, and I begin my lap around. Further down the path, I see a group of people by the fountain, and I start to jog down the path, ducking into a grove of trees. Maybe if I'm quiet, I can watch the shoot and take notes.

The photographer is yelling instructions in Italian, but the boy who looks to be around my age, takes it all in stride. I peer closer. That isn't just any boy model, it's Adrien Agreste!

He has intense green eyes and blonde hair which he styles perfectly over to one side. By the looks of it, he uses product as it shimmers and shines in the sun. I'm glad I'm hiding, if I got a chance to talk to him, I'd stumble and trip over my words. He's beautiful, but as I stare into his eyes, I can tell he's hiding a deep dark secret. How do I know? You can tell a lot from reading someone's eyes.

My mouth grows thirsty and I begin to head out of the trees, when I'm thrown to the ground, hitting dirt hard. Instantly, I can see him bolting away with my purse, and I scramble to my feet, yelling, "Stop, thief!"

Apparently, Adrien saw what happened and he and I team up as we dash after Mystery Man. Adrien takes on a burst of speed, while my lungs appear to bursting. Adrien tackles the guy to the ground, throwing back the black hood.

I jog up, surprised to see a older man laying on the ground. “Taking money from a harmless teenager when you could get help or a job? Your disgusting!” The man stares at the two of us, not saying a word, before shoving my purse into Adrien’s hands. Then he takes off.

“Your purse, Miss….” Adrien does a little bow, and I feel myself blushing. Why? “Marinette.” “Paris may be the City of Light and Love, but that doesn’t mean there’s not pickpockets.” “Thanks for saving my purse.” Adrien steps forward, brushing some dirt off my cheek. “I’m just glad your alright. Are you new to Paris?” I nod. “Adrien!” the photographer barks, and we both turn towards him. “You only have thirty minutes left of the shoot before your father sends the car. Let’s roll!”

“I’ll see you around,” Adrien gazes at me one more time. “See ya.”

I should have been scared when we chased the man, who knows if he was armed or not? But Adrien touching my cheek….

Stop. You don’t even know him. Ouch, the thought makes me sad. Could it be possible that Adrien will attend the same school as me? Nah. I’d need a miracle for that to happen. Exiting the park, I draw out my crumpled map, heading to my grandparents.

My Grandma Gina who taught me all I know about sewing has traveled the world over, and still travels to this day. Grandpa Rolland is very set in tradition and loves staying home and making bread.

I find the house and head up the front walk, ringing the small bell. “Marinetta!” I’m scooped up in a family hug between my grandparents. “Grandma! Grandpa! I got accepted to school!”

“We are so proud of you, my fairy, now we’ll show your room while your here. This way.” I adore my attic room complete with window seat and window, plus a desk to sketch.

“Mm, smells like Grandpa’s been baking!” I follow Grandma downstairs. “We’ll leave your grandpa for now, you know how he is. How’s China, your mother? I haven’t seen Sabine in ages.”

My tongue ties. Mama and I don't have the best relationship, and she was disappointed when I didn't want to stay and help in the bakery. "Our relationship's...difficult, but she's doing well." "Oh, Marinette."

Grandma pulls me into a hug and I hug her back fiercely. When I'm at a low point or a art block, it's me who has to pull myself out of it and keep on going. Easier said then done.

"Your going to do marvelous at school and make so many new friends." I think I'd like Adrien as a friend, a little voice in my head pipes up.

I sigh, my knee is beginning to hurt from my earlier fall. Not that I'm telling anyone. "Grandma, is there a enough time for a bath before dinner?" "Of course. Rest and take it easy."

I smile, and trudge wearily back upstairs. Little did I know I had my first brush with the Supreme, the man who changed my life and my future partner's.

Day 2-Grandparents

Chapter Summary

Marinette is a bit embarrassed as her grandparents take her to her the new school, but things aren't all bad as she meets a new friend named Rebelle.

“What?!” My fork drops onto my plate with a loud clang. I thought Papa would be moving me into the dorms, but instead my grandparents are instead!

As much as I love them, at times they can be a bit embarrassing, and I want just a sliver of a chance to be a cool girl on campus. Papa lays a warm hand on mine. “I’m sorry, sweetie, but I’ve spent enough time already away from getting the shop ready.”

I lower my eyes, looking at my pancakes. “Yes, Papa,” I whisper. They’ve given me so much, I’m not going to start whining now. “It will be fun, dear. And I’ve always wanted a peek at that school,” Grandma smiles. “I’m curious how they run the cafeteria,” Grandpa chimes in. “And we have a surprise for you, only it isn’t ready yet,” Grandma sighs. I perk up at the word “surprise.”

“Whatever it is, I’m sure it will be lovely.” After breakfast, we pile in my suitcases before heading out to the shops for the list of essential items I’ll need for my dorm. When I pull out my credit card at a high-end art shop, Grandma shoos my hand away. “You’ll need that money later. I’ll take care of this.”

Did a ladybug crawl into my suitcase and I wasn’t aware? Ladybugs are considered good luck in China, and with my clumsiness, I’m always in need of a little luck. Yet, the opposite of good luck is bad, which is usually associated with black cats and I love black cats and cats in general.

Grandma clears her throat rather loudly. “Marinette, the sales lady asked you a question.” “Oh!” I squeak. There I go again, my thoughts in the clouds. Mm, at least this time it wasn’t about Adrien! “Are you looking forward to art school?” she asks. “Yes. Very much. I have to keep pinching myself I got in.”

“Is that the time? Marinette, we must fly if we want to be on time for orientation!”

When we pull through the gates of the school, I think I'll need more then a pinch. It's even bigger and beautiful in person!

A girl with long hair with a tattoo greets us. As I look closer at her design, I realize it's not a tattoo at all, but some sort of symbol. Perhaps she's in a club here?

"Are you here for orientation?" she asks with a bright smile. Grandma nods. "Just follow the parade of cars and they'll have a sign out in front of the main building! Good luck!"

"Thanks," I tell her shyly, seeing that her name tag reads "Rebelle." I wonder if it's some kind of nickname.

I hold Grandma's hand as we join the swarm of people, and I have to give my information, getting my packet of the handbook of rules, my dorm key and my class schedule.

"Looks like your in the Milan Dorms," Grandma helps me find it on one of the many sheets. "Let's head over there now."

Excited but nervous looking girls carrying pillows, blankets and other belongings head upstairs to our rooms, while returning students watch us from painting their nails on the couch.

"Look at all the Designer-Wanna Be's!" A girl with blonde hair says to her friends, wearing one of the most expensive outfits I've ever seen while painting her nails a Dashing Green. She looks familiar, but I can't place her as I trudge up the stairs.

How my parents could afford my tuition, I'll always be grateful as many of the students here are rich, and maybe here just for the parties.

I forget all about her though when I open the door to my room, squealing with happiness. My room is pink, and my favorite color is pink!

Grandma and I have a blast as we decorate my room while listening to music, and soon my room begins to feel like home.

Eventually, I flop down my bed. I'm here at Paris's School of Art and Design in my dorm room. Maybe I'll be the one throwing some cool parties if I can have some luck.

It's so hard to say goodbye, and I cry when they leave, burying my face into my purple cat pillow. "Knock, knock," a muffled voice calls and I spring up, grabbing a tissue.

"It's you!" I exclaim as I open the door, finding the girl I met from outside. "I'm your next door roomie, Rebelle. I thought I'd come check to see if your settling in. Oh, were you crying?"

A trickle of tears warms my cheek. "I just said goodbye to my grandma, and my papa this morning." "Don't worry, the first week or so is always the hardest, and then you settle in." I sigh with a smile. "I wish I could have the confidence you do." "Hey, we all got in for a reason, and you'll find your place to shine." I hold out my hand and my door wider. "Marinette."

"Hold on, I'll be right back," Rebelle scurries away, reappearing with a bag of coffee and a cookie tin full of cookies. "You like coffee and cookies, right?" she asks, plugging in the small machine. "I wouldn't be a baker's daughter if I wasn't."

With steaming cups of coffee, we chat about our families, friends and our dreams. "I'm kinda just dabbling around in the Arts right now, but I know I'll find my true calling eventually," Rebelle tells me.

"Fashion Designer. As long as they don't make me walk the runway. I'm so shy." Rebelle begins to look uncomfortable. "What?" I demand. "It's one of the required classes, but don't worry, I did it last semester, and I'll help you. Unless you get a cute boy to walk with you instead!"

I laugh, throwing a heart-shaped pillow at her. Should I tell her about my encounter with the Adrien Agreste? Nah. She seems to like me for me, and I'd rather keep it that way.

She lets me have some quiet time, promising to pick me up for supper. I lay back on the bed, thinking about a nap, when another knock comes at the door. It's the girl from downstairs, the one I couldn't place.

“We and my friend here saw you arrive. This your first year here?” I nod. “Don’t get in my way, okay? Say, would you like to earn some extra cash?” My head is spinning. “Excuse me?”

“Oh, the chores are easy…” “Marinette,” “Marinette. Cute. Once a week you’d do my laundry, and I’d tell you when I want my nails redone, plus other small chores.”

“I came here to be a designer, not be a maid!” The girl takes out a Emory board, looking well, bored. “I’d pay you, and I pay good.” “Who are you?” “Chloe B!” “Like in Queen Bee?”

As in, if us little people don’t do your work, we’ll get stung? “The one and only!” I laugh. Is this girl for real? “Okay, but give me a day or two to settle in.”

“I’ll give you two days.” Our phones go off alerting us it’s time for dinner, and Rebelle emerges from her room a look of disgust on her face. “What are you doing, Chloe? Your not bothering Marinette, are you?”

Chloe looks from me to Rebelle and back again. “We were just talking,” she simpers, then links her arm through her friend? Sidekick’s arm sauntered downstairs.

“Don’t promise her anything, Marinette.” “I won’t do anything rash.”

I love being able to fill my plate with delicious food, and Rebelle leads me to a table filled with chattering girls. I begin to eat, listening to the conversation.

“Rebelle, you ready for Snoring Announcements tomorrow?” a girl asks. “What announcements?” I ask, nearly snorting out my orange juice. “Morning announcements,” Rebelle gives me a sheepish grin. “Only a few people around here snore through them.”

I know I won’t be doing any snoring, I’ll be paying close attention. And then I spot him. Like a runway model, Adrien Agreste moves silently through the crowds, finding a empty table.

Thank you, Lady Luck! I want to shout. “Marinette!” Rebelle shakes my arm, and I snap out of it. “What are you staring at so hard? Or who are you looking at?”

I want to answer, but just then my eyes lock with Adrien’s. My world shifts, blurring and disappearing, my eyes only on him. And then the spell is broken as he looks away.

“You were looking at Adrien, weren’t you?” Rebelle says as I come to. “Um, yeah.” I feel my cheeks grow hot.

“Marinette, I have some news for you.” My heart drops. Oh, no. Does he already have a girlfriend? Only, he wouldn’t look at me in that way if he did. “He doesn’t date.” Oof.

“What do you mean, doesn’t date?” I peek over at him subtly, but he’s not paying attention now. “He wants to focus on school.” Did he turn Rebelle down? “All I’m saying is, don’t get your hopes up.”

Like I’d even have a chance to begin with. But even I don’t believe those words, feeling a small spark of hope. “Maybe, maybe not.”

After supper it’s time for bed, or so I think. “Oh, Marinette!” Chloe sings I trudge wearily up the stairs. “Yes?” I look back at her warily, knowing this girl is going to be trouble. “Would be a sweet and do the laundry? I want to look fresh for tomorrow.” “Chloe, it’s the first day…” Chloe ignores me as she digs her purse pulling out a crisp fifty. “You want it?”

“Fine.” How hard could it be? I’ll just have to get up extra early but I was planning on doing that anyway.

I divide the lights and darks, loading the right amount of soap into the machine, feeling the first wave of yawns wash over me. If I fall asleep, will I dream of Adrien? Only time will tell.

Day 3-New Friends

Chapter Summary

Marinette is having trouble finding her place at school, but it's not long before she makes new friends and even has a few small brushes with Adrien.

“Marinette, time to get up!” I hear Rebelle knocking on my door. I’m tempted to chuck my pillow at said door. “Five more minutes,” I groan. Besides, I was having a lovely dream about Adrien, whether he dates or not.

“Rise and shine!” Rebelle skips into my room, and opens the curtains, the light flooding into the room. “Hey!” I protest, then swing myself vertical. “Okay,” I grumble, and my new friend giggles. “Not a morning person I take it?” I grin at her while walking to my closet. “If you can make me a morning person by the end of the semester, I’ll make you a outfit of your choice.” “You're on!”

I select a simple but nice-looking outfit for my first day. A slim-fitting pink top and dark blue jeans. I sigh as I undo my pigtails, letting my black unruly hair tumble down around my shoulders. “Your hair’s pretty.” Rebelle comes to stand by the mirror with me. “Can you help me with my rat’s nest?” “Sure. Where’s the comb?” Much giggling ensues, and I’m starting to feel less and less nervous about today.

We tumble down the stairs and head over to the dining hall. “Rebelle! Their nearly out of cinnamon rolls!” a girl wails, and Rebelle smiles at two girls. “Who’s your friend?” the other asks. “Marinette,” I stick out my hand. “I’m Celeste and that’s Lyra. Now come on, I need food!” I laugh, following the girls in.

We grab our trays and begin to fill our plates, and I select eggs, grilled tomatoes and baked beans. I don’t want my stomach growling halfway through classes. Way to embarrassing! I’m almost to the front, deciding what kind of milk to get: do I get a bottle or a carton when I feel a brush of hand. “Sorry, I-” I turn, the words dying away in my throat as Adrien stands there. “Hey, Marinette. I prefer a bottle of milk.” Before my brain can figure out what happened, he’s already walking away. A warm feeling settles in my stomach, and I haven’t even eaten yet.

“Ooh, what was that about?” Celeste is curious as I slide into my seat. “Nothing. Accidental brushing of hands.” Or...was that a subtle flirt attempt, Agreste? I should be eating, but I search the dining hall for him. Nothing.

“So, what classes do you have, Marinette?” Celeste asks, and I tell her my schedule. “Great, you have embroidery too!” “Anyone got cross-stitch, or graphic design?” We compare notes until the PA crackles to life and it’s time for announcements.

Despite what I’ve heard, I like them. We get to see all the teachers, and while some look sweet, some look like they mean business!

I have Art First Hour, and wave goodbye to my friends, consulting my map. But when I get to class everyone is already seated expect for one spot: Right next to Adrien. Now, the teacher has yet to enter the room so I’m not late, but I know I’m going to have a knotted tongue around this boy. Trying not to look like a tomato, I grip my backpack and keep my head down. Big mistake as I trip in the aisle.

Adrien leaps up to steady me, catching me before I crash to the floor. Our eyes lock and a angelic smile appears on his face. “That’s two for two, Marinette.” Yeah, this is the second time he’s saved me. “I’m warning you, I’m cute and dangerous with my feet.” Cute? Dangerous? Feet? Can a hole suck me in? Now?

Adrien chuckles. “I’ll keep that in mind.” After I’m seated, I feel calmer laying out my supplies. After introductions, our teacher tells us we can paint a water scene, be it a waterfall or just droplets falling from the sky.

Soon I lose myself in my piece, for art is one of my comforts to cure my shyness and loneliness. “That’s beautiful,” my teacher stops in front of my piece. “A girl forgets her umbrella, and the guy she likes gives her a umbrella, and together they dance in rain.”

To my embarrassed surprised, the room claps. “Keep on drawing like this, and you’ll a shoo-in for A!” Pink and pleased, I collect my jar of water and make my way over to the sink. Even catching sight of my paint splattered face in the mirror can’t hide glow, and no one can dampen my spirits.

Until one of the students pipes up that it has begun to rain, and I groan inwardly. I’m the girl in my painting who forgot her umbrella. “What’s wrong?” Adrien asks as I gather my things. “I’m the girl in the painting, for I have no umbrella.” “Hey, I’ll walk you to your next class. What is it?” I scramble in my bag. “Art History.” “And I have math, but it’s no problem.”

I keep peeking over at Adrien, noticing his nails are painted black, and despite his kindness towards me, he doesn’t smile much. Still, when he’s ready to open up, I’d listen. Suddenly,

Adrien goes stock still. “Don’t move,” he whispered, putting his hand on my shoulder. Well, at least he didn’t catch me staring.

I do as I’m told, but I wonder what Adrien sees in the rainy gloom. Eventually, he lets out a breath. “I thought I saw a shadow watching us, but it’s gone now.” By now we’re at my next building. “Thanks for the use of the umbrella,” I tell him softly, my cheeks glowing a soft pink.

Then, before I can process it, his hand is on my cheek, grazing it with his thumb. “Marinette.” I can’t take my eyes away from him, their magnetic force has all the power. And as good as his hand feels caressing my cheek, I want him to kiss me.

“See ya,” Adrien trudges away into the gloom, leaving cold. I hurry into my classroom. “Good of you to show up, Miss Dupain-Cheng,” my teacher scowls. “Sorry, I got lost on the grounds.” It’s sort of true. I would have gotten lost if not for Adrien. I hate the way my shoes squish and squeak on the way to my desk.

Try as I might, I have a hard time concentrating in class. If Adrien “doesn’t date” then what are all these little flirty things he’s doing? Could my friends be wrong, and has feelings for me? He barely knows me. But given the chance, I would to have a friend like him.

One of the girls nudges me, pointing towards the front. Oh, knitting and needles! Did Teacher ask a question? I ask him to repeat it and get away with it, but I get told to “see me after class.” Great.

“Please be on time and pay attention. When designing a new collection or runway show, you cannot have your head in the clouds. Plus, I’ve been told your a good student, Marinette.”

“I’m so sorry, it won’t happen again.”

The clouds are still low in the gloomy sky as I emerge, and there’s a crowd gathered on the front lawn. “What’s going on?” I ask. “It’s Adrien’s mother, Emile. She just passed away.”

No, no. I heard she was sick, but this? Is this why Adrien is like he is? And then he appears, a lone figure striding towards a sleek car. “I’m so sorry,” I whisper. Then I turn and head to my room.

“Oh, Marinette!” Cringe. Chloe. “I need you to decorate my folders with stickers.” I sigh heavily. “I’m not really in mood, Chloe.” “Oh,” she examines her nails a moment before giving me a nasty smile. “Do you want me to blab it was you who left one of the side

entrances open?" I step back, away from her stabbing nail. "I didn't-" "Oh, you will." she plonks her books down in my hands.

I'll work it later. Once in my room, I flop down on my bed, feeling a crinkle of paper beneath me.

"Marinette, how is school?

Are you too busy to answer your mother's note because you're too busy partying?

Write soon,
Mama

Angrily, I rip the note up and chuck it in the trash. Partying? Ha! And then I think of Adrien who has no mother now. Would that be the way he would have handled the note?

And then the tears start to flow, and I crawl up to my pillow. It feels good to cry, for everything is raw and real. Snuffling up my tears, I stand up. I may not be able to talk to Adrien, but Rebelle is a loyal friend.

I glance at my "work" from Chloe and open the door considering leaving it right where it is. But then I trudge back over and gather the things, I'll work on it in her room.

"Marinette? Have you been crying?" Rebelle opens the door wide. "I could use a friend, and Adrien's mom." fresh tears spring to my eyes. "Oh, Marinette. Give me those." She tosses the stickers aside, pulling me into a hug. Everything comes out and Rebelle listens, letting me vent.

"The first week is always the hardest and you're doing great. Sure, maybe you had a hiccup or two but it's over now."

"I'd never thought I'd have a friend like you, or a friend at all. I spent most days helping out in the bakery when I lived in China."

Of course, Rebelle wants to know about that, and we get to work on the stickers. "Pretty soon, she'll have you mopping the floors. Do you really want be a Cinderella?"

I laugh. "Hey, even Cinderella found her prince."

During dinner, I tuck into my chicken fried rice. However, I put down my fork when the PA crackles to life again. Gabriel Agreste will be giving a talk tomorrow afternoon. Immediately the whispers start up. How can he be so composed right after his wife's funeral? But then a idea hits, and I finish my meal quickly and scurry back to my room.

Day 4-Girls Night

Chapter Summary

> Marinette and her friends attend a party, and Marinette bumps into Adrien. Adrien needs to talk out his feelings and Marinette is willing to listen until they get interrupted by a cloak figured. Are they friend or foe?

"I know it's in here somewhere," I rummage through the trunk I brought, then smile triumphantly pulling out a black handkerchief.

If I'm allowed to talk to Mr. Agreste tomorrow, I will give him this hankie as a condolence. Only I plan to fancy it up a bit. Now where is my black lace and my needle and thread?

Once my work station is ready, I don a sweater and open the window, breathing in the sweet rain-washed air. With every pull of the needle and thread, funny as it is to say this, but it's like I'm sewing my own heart back together. My gift to Gabriel is not to win brownie points or put me on his radar.

Back in China once school was over and I had completed chores and homework, I would prop my little phone against my wall and copy patterns from Gabriel's sewing videos. While other designers would whip through their piece (no pun intended!) Gabriel would explain each step clearly and slowly. He seems like such a gentle man but even back then I could see the sadness behind his eyes. Emile Agreste had been sick for years until she disappeared from the public spotlight and Gabriel posted less frequently. Sure, everyone must find their own unique style in the world of fashion, but Gabriel I have always looked up to.

A tapping at my door pauses my work and Celeste and Rebelle look excited. "We need some fun, so we planned a girl's night! Popcorn, movies…" My face falls. As much as I want to, I should return to my work and am I really good at small talk or will I just embarrass myself further?

Rebelle eyes my recent project. "You weren't…." her voice trails off, keeping my secrets. "It's for Mr. Agreste, actually. Has anyone heard from Adrien?" "As I said, Marinette, Adrien keeps to himself. He's kind of a mystery around here."

That's actually a really accurate description of him. To bad I can't text him. "Okay, I guess this could wait for a bit." "Could I bring my face paints?" Celeste asks. "We have a quiz on them tomorrow."

"Ta-da!" Celeste grins at me as she wiggles her fingers. "You are now a cute ladybug!" I giggle, catching sight of myself, red-faced and dotted but for once not embarrassed but happy.

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To save time, I lend Celeste some clothes, and don a black stocking cap. "You know what she's up to, don't you?" Celeste shrugs.

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"This way!" Celeste and I link arms not to be separated and we head down to one of the abandoned Subway tunnels. Eerie sounds of plopping water high in the ceiling reach our ears, plus a low rumbling sound. We walk over to a boarded up tunnel and Rebelle knocks three times.

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“What is this place?” I turn to my friend. She sighs, taking our hands. “Guys, I have a confession to make.” “Your not in trouble, are you?” “No. My name isn’t real Rebelle, it’s Rebel, like rebelling against something. I changed my name to get into school, cause news flash, I’m a orphan.” “But how did you get in? And how is this party connected to school?” I ask.

“Good grades and smarts will get you anywhere, and down here in the tunnels is for people just like me, or need to escape there lives. There’s no funny business, I promise, just a good old time!”

“Then what are we waiting for? Let’s dance!”

The music is infectious, but with all the people we get lost in the crowd. Feeling hot and thirsty, I wander through the crowd looking for the refreshment tables. I find myself being stared at, and I can’t help wondering? Are they staring at me because I’m a outsider? Or could it possibly be….they think I’m beautiful?

At last, I find the refreshment table, mulling over the drinks and waiting for a boy to keep the line moving. “Having a hard time deciding?” I ask, my mouth dropping open when Adrien turns to stare at me. “Adrien?” Adrien pushes his shaggy hair back. “Hey, Marinette. What are you doing here?” “Rebelle wanted a girls night, and here I am. I’m kinda surprised to see you here though.” “Oh?”

“Your mother’s funereal was today. My mom and I don’t have the best relationship, but I if I were you, I’d be bawling my eyes out.” Adrien opens his mouth then closes it, leaning forward putting his hand on my arm. “It’s because of that I’m here. And I really need a friend to talk to.” “I’m a good listener.”

Adrien smiles and I’m reminded of a angel, only the boy before me doesn’t have wings. “Come with me then.”

We exit through a back door, and the party sounds fade away in the distance. We sit down, our legs dangling over a abandoned stretch of Subway track.

“I wanted to get out because all my life I’ve been locked into photo shoots and magazine spreads. When I have “free” time, my parents kept me in. Father’s always been away, and he didn’t want me sneaking out, so he sent me to boarding school.”

“That sounds awful. Did you ever see your friends?” Adrien gives me a bitter smile. “I’ve never had friends, only fans.” Before I know I’m doing it, I slip my hand into his. “There’s a very big difference between true friends who care about you, and fans who only see you for your beauty and fame.”

“I think you meet the former category, Marinette.” “You want to know a secret? I never had friends either, until I came to school.” “We’re a good match then.” “Funny, because around school there’s a rumor that you don’t date.” Adrien leans in close, eyes sparkling. “What if I just haven’t met the right girl yet?” Good thing the darkness hides my blush. “This is going to sound cheesy, but I could be your friend.”

“I’d like that. And I….” Adrien’s voice trails away. “Please tell me,” I whisper. “I want to dance with you.” “There’s no music.” Adrien keeps my hand as we stand up. “Ah, that’s were your wrong. Listen.”

Listening, I can rhythmic plopping sound coming from the ceiling. “If you listen hard, you can make a raindrop a melody.”

We’re a bit shy and awkward as we begin to dance, but as we grow more comfortable with each other, Adrien pulls me to his chest, and I lean against him, eyes closed and perfectly at peace. I feel safe and warm, and I never want this moment to end. But like all dances, the music stops eventually, free falling you into silence.

“Marinette,” Adrien lifts my chin with one finger, and my heartbeat picks up. And then we’re kissing. It’s a soft kiss, like a butterfly’s wing and my heart feels light and happy.

When the kiss ends, we gaze at each other. “We really should be getting back to the party,” I say. “Your not going anywhere yet,” a silken voice says from the shadows.

A figure steps out of the tunnel, cloak a ashy gray color and I can barely see him in the dim light. “Your going to help me find a piece of jewelry,” he continues. “And if we refuse?” Adrien’s voice has harden.

“Oh, there’s something for you too. In fact, it will change your lives. Have you ever heard of a Miraculous?” Adrien and I shake our heads.

“Magical jewels that grant magical powers beyond your wildest dreams. Accept and you won’t regret, reject and pay the price.”

“Okay, we’ll do it,” I say, bravely stepping forward. “Ah, your the clumsy girl, and with your Miraculous you will be graceful and beautiful, even more beautiful then you are now. And for the boy, full of mysterious perfection...your Miraculous will cause bad luck and destruction to those around you, but not yourself.” He hands us little boxes, then hands me a scrap of paper.

“The artifact you are looking for is the Butterfly Miraculous shaped like brooch. One of my sworn enemies has stolen it from me, and you will get it back. Once the Miraculous has been activated, he will no doubt seek you out. I will keep watch of your progress, but stay hidden in the shadows unless I must intervene. Don’t fail me.”

“But who are you?” Adrien and I both gasp as the mysterious figure throws back his hood. “I am the Supreme.”

Day 4-Girls Night

Chapter Summary

> Marinette and her friends attend a party, and Marinette bumps into Adrien. Adrien needs to talk out his feelings and Marinette is willing to listen until they get interrupted by a cloak figured. Are they friend or foe?

"I know it's in here somewhere," I rummage through the trunk I brought, then smile triumphantly pulling out a black handkerchief.

If I'm allowed to talk to Mr. Agreste tomorrow, I will give him this hankie as a condolence. Only I plan to fancy it up a bit. Now where is my black lace and my needle and thread?

Once my work station is ready, I don a sweater and open the window, breathing in the sweet rain-washed air. With every pull of the needle and thread, funny as it is to say this, but it's like I'm sewing my own heart back together. My gift to Gabriel is not to win brownie points or put me on his radar.

Back in China once school was over and I had completed chores and homework, I would prop my little phone against my wall and copy patterns from Gabriel's sewing videos. While other designers would whip through their piece (no pun intended!) Gabriel would explain each step clearly and slowly. He seems like such a gentle man but even back then I could see the sadness behind his eyes. Emile Agreste had been sick for years until she disappeared from the public spotlight and Gabriel posted less frequently. Sure, everyone must find their own unique style in the world of fashion, but Gabriel I have always looked up to.

A tapping at my door pauses my work and Celeste and Rebelle look excited. "We need some fun, so we planned a girl's night! Popcorn, movies…" My face falls. As much as I want to, I should return to my work and am I really good at small talk or will I just embarrass myself further?

Rebelle eyes my recent project. "You weren't…." her voice trails off, keeping my secrets. "It's for Mr. Agreste, actually. Has anyone heard from Adrien?" "As I said, Marinette, Adrien keeps to himself. He's kind of a mystery around here."

That's actually a really accurate description of him. To bad I can't text him. "Okay, I guess this could wait for a bit." "Could I bring my face paints?" Celeste asks. "We have a quiz on them tomorrow."

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Day 5-Pink Scooter

Chapter Summary

Marinette is excited to meet Mr. Agreste, until she sees how upset Adrien is. Marinette knows friendship is the order of the day, plus learning about her Miraculous.

“Marinette?” I freeze, hearing my friends calling for me. “We can’t let them know about the Supreme, or the Miraculous!” I hiss at Adrien. He leads back to my friends, and one by one, their jaws drop as hey seeing me holding hands with Adrien Agreste.

“We couldn’t find you,” Celeste says. “And someone told us you went off with Adrien.” “I needed Marinette’s help, that’s all,” Adrien replies. Wow, he is smooth. “Come on, I don’t want to turn into a pumpkin, and it’s nearly midnight!”

With Adrien’s help, it’s easy to get back to school, and it makes me wonder. How much time does Adrien spend down there in the subway? He seemed eager to get away from the crowds, so I assume he hangs out down there alone. “It’s a shame, Marinette. There was a girl there that was awesome at dying hair, and you’d look good with a streak of pink.” Celeste’s face lights up. “I could do her hair!” she squeals.

I laugh. “Yeah, and you can explain to the teachers why my hair is magnetic orange!” The girls groan in protest, and I look at Adrien. “If I do it, you’ll need to be there to supervise. We could do on Sunday in the Lounge.”

The Lounge is the hot hangout spot, and it works because Adrien can’t enter the dorms, just in the commons area. “I’d be happy to help,” he gives me a shy smile. “Yay, she’ll do it! Marinette and Adrien, sitting in a tree…” “Girls! Stop it,” I laugh, face as hot as fire, but Adrien’s laughing too.

“See you at the assembly,” I whisper as we approach the front door of my dorm. “Parting is such sweet sorrow,” Adrien recites, then melds into the darkness.

Surprisingly, the girls don’t push or prod about what Adrien and I did, and I’m glad I don’t have to give them details. I think of the box with my Miraculous as I enter my quiet room, shoving it into the back of the drawer to be thought about later. Time to catch some zzz!

“Girl, I am shocked. Your up once before your alarm?” Rebelle’s voice is thick and sleepy as she brushes my long hair in neat strokes. “It’s been a hard weekend for Mr. Agreste. The last thing I want to do is show up sloppily dressed and unprepared.”

“You really admire him, don’t you?” I nod. But now that I know that there are multiple sides of Mr. Agreste from what I’ve learned from Adrien, I’m a bit conflicted about how I feel. “And you admire Adrien even more.” “Adrien needs a friend, and he needs one now more then ever.”

“There, your perfect. It won’t just be Adrien sitting up and taking notice,” Rebelle grins. “Girl, don’t exaggerate.”

My hair is French braided and I’m wearing a loose and flowery top, plus black slacks and ballet flats. “Come on, time to go.” Just in time, I remember my “secret” gift for Mr. Agreste.

There’s a air of anticipation as we enter the auditorium a hour later, and a collected hush falls over the students as Mr. Agreste takes the stage. His rhythmic footfalls echo throughout the room, until he reaches dead center, staring out at the crowd.

He’s just the way I remember him in my videos as he demonstrates new sewing techniques on a mannequin. But I’m confused. This man just lost his wife, and yet he carries on like nothing has happened. While I feel warm and comforted in Adrien’s presence, I feel coldness and lack of love.

I’m shocked as Adrien is called onto the stage, and I can see he has been crying, his eyes pink, but as a professional model he wears a mask of no emotion. My heart aches for him, and when Adrien runs from the stage, I know I must do something.

Being quiet, I quietly get up from my seat. “Marinette!” Celeste hisses, grabbing my arm. “The lecture isn’t over yet, and if you don’t take this opportunity now, you may never meet Mr. Agreste.”

“Some things are more important, like being a good friend when you need them most.” Celeste smiles. “Let me know if you kiss.”

I find my way backstage and see Adrien huddled in a corner, crying. At least, I think he’s crying by the way his shoulders are moving up and down. Suddenly, Adrien’s head jerks up as he feels me watching him. “Marinette?” His face is blackened with his tears and mascara, leaving tracks down his tear-stained face.

Going over to the little washstand, I dampen a paper towel and sit down next to him, cleaning his face gently. Then, I take out my gift. “What’s this?” Adrien asks, holding up my decorated hankie. “It was supposed to be a gift for your father, but I think you could use it more.”

Adrien blows his nose, smiling at me, before his green eyes flash. “I told him I didn’t want to go on, but he didn’t listen. I’m all jumbled up inside, Marinette.” I take his hands. “These

feelings are normal, and you're processing your emotions. That doesn't mean want he made you do is right though."

"Can we just run away together?" Adrien jokes, laying his head on my shoulder. "Our Miraculous," I whisper, and Adrien lifts his head.

We exit onto the deserted campus lawn. "I'll get mine and meet you back here in a few," I tell him, jogging away.

When I come back outside, it's not just Adrien waiting for me. "Delivery for Miss Dupain-Cheng?" the delivery man says, and my eyes widen as he gestures to the bright pink scooter. "Sign here, please."

I think my face is the same color as the scooter, and Adrien grins at me after the man leaves. "Nice ride." "It was a gift," my voice is two octaves higher with embarrassment, "from my grandparents."

We head back to the subway, but today no parties are occurring, it's just me and Adrien. "We'll open our boxes together on the count of three, okay?"

Two beams of bright light, one red and green blind us temporarily and when my eyes adjust, two little floating creatures stare back at us. "You must Marinette and Adrien, our new holders! I'm Tikki, the Kwami of creation, and you, Marinette, have been granted the powers of the ladybug!"

"Great, I always wanted to sway on a flower and sip nectar all day long," I grin, and Adrien cracks up. The black one, who we learn is named Plagg, scowls. "And you got the worse luck of being the black cat of destruction! Now, where are you keeping the cheese?" "Plagg!" Tikki barks. "Sorry, he's cheese obsessed." We learn about our powers and how they work. Now seems as good a time as any.

"So, all I have to say is Tikki, Spots On?" Before she can respond, she's swirling into my red-and-black dotted earrings, and a suit of red and black dons my body.

"Um, Marinette, you can open your eyes now," I hear Adrien say. "Hey! You need to pick your masked identity name," Plagg says. "Toxinelle." I look over at Adrien, who is trying not to laugh. "What?!" "Hold on, I want to see what I look like as a cat." "I could tell you that," I mumble, "Cute and ferocious."

But when his suit comes on, it's me who cracks up. "What is with the hair? It's so green!" "Hey, let's not knock each other's suits until we've seen them."

We find a puddle and stare down at our reflections. Adrien does look menacing and dangerous, but still extremely cute. I look feral, with red eyes and a a red streak brushes across my bangs. "Your beautiful," Adrien says, and I stare at him. "And what are you going to call yourself?" "Claw Noir." I grab one of his hands, examining his claws. "Hm, looks like someone could use a trim!" "I hiss and swipe, Cockroach!"

I gasp, dropping his hand. “Excuse me, did you call me a Cockroach?” “Yeah, a hissing cockroach!” Oh, this boy. “Watch it Fleabag, I have hidden powers and am not afraid to use them.”

“Didn’t Tikki say something about a Lucky Charm?” I unhook my yo-yo from my belt. “Wish this were breakfast cereal. Lucky Charm!”

A teapot drops into my hands, and I give Claw a questioning look. “What am I supposed to do with this? Make tea?” And then it hits me. “Come on, let’s go get tea.”

With the look he gives me, you would have thought I would have suggested what a cat hates most: a good hot soapy bath. “Tea?! Yuck!” “It doesn’t actually have to be tea! It’s saying we can get to know each other over tea or coffee or whatever!”

Claw breaks into a cute grin, cute but dangerous. “You look cute with that little angry pout of yours.” I sigh, taking his hand? Paw? “Come on, I think the swamp fumes are getting to both of us.”

It’s good to get back to fresh air, and we find a cute little coffee shop. I order a mocha frappe, and Claw orders a hazelnut one.

“So, when do we start the butterfly hunt?” he asks. I sigh. “That will be kinda hard when we have no clue what he looks like. Plus, I’m new to Paris, remember?”

“Here’s a idea. As long as our homework is caught up, we patrol every night. That way you can learn the city and look for our mystery man, and we can spend some time together.” “I’d like that.” I lean forward.

“Do you think what we’re doing is right?” Claw’s eyes are finally serious. “I don’t think we have a choice.”

We finish our drinks in silence, and on the way home so many questions swirl around in my mind. But the image of me in my suit stays with me the most, for it’s one of the first time I’ve felt beautiful.

Day 6-Theories

Chapter Summary

Marinette learns more about Adrien, and wonders who the Supreme actually is, not knowing he has a message for and Adrien, and Marinette isn't sure if she's going to like it.

“Celeste, did you bring the whole salon with you to do Marinette’s hair?” Rebelle giggles as we walk to the Lounge. Celeste makes a face at her. “Course not, only the things we need, and Marinette has such pretty hair already.” “Thanks,” I smile at her.

With it being Sunday morning, the Lounge will be quiet and empty, so no one will complain about the fumes. I think of my red streak as Toxinelle, but it’s not like anyone can now about that besides Adrien. Last night, I dreamed I was flying over through the rooftops of Paris with Claw by my side. It was a wonderful feeling until I realized, I need yo-yo lessons before I do any flying.

“Hey, girls,” Adrien leans against the counter, looking adorable in a fluffy sweater and ripped jeans. “I brought coffee.” “Coffee?” I perk up at the word, then start to stammer. “I mean, not that I’m not excited to see you too, Adrien.” Adrien leans forward as he hands me my drink. “You look beautiful, Cockroach.”

I’m wearing one of the outfits I designed myself, a outfit full of denim and patches, and I choose a red bandanna for my hair. “Found any fleas in the mohawk?” I giggle, and he mock glares at me. “I’ll have you know, I only use Fluff and Shine. Smells like peaches.”

I nearly lose my coffee as I double over with laughter. “Fluff and Shine? What is that, like, pet shampoo?”

“Aw, their flirting over hair care products,” Rebelle swoons. “Speaking of hair,” Celeste motions to the chair. “Come on, you,” Adrien takes my hand and leads me over.

Despite the stinky spray, it's kinda fun being pampered. "How do you like being a model, Adrien?" Rebelle asks. Adrien sighs. "I used to like it. But then my father started making my career more important then spending time as a family. When I'm at at shoots, he's always designing dresses and costumes. A father should love their son, not make him a product."

Celeste looks over at him. "Then your going to hate one of the classes tomorrow. We're walking the runway." "What?" I yelp. "Sit still!" she scolds, and I settle back in my seat. "Marinette, with you wanting to be a designer, I thought this would be fun for you."

"I'm as clumsy as they get, and I don't like the spotlight," I confess. "Plus, I hate being laughed at. Can I tell you guys a secret?" "We're your friends, Marinette. And even if you do fall, will be right there to pick you up. You can tell us anything."

I take a deep breath. "When I was younger, I was helping Papa with the icing, and I accidentally spilled a whole bag of flour. Mama got so mad, and she yelled in front of a huge crowd of strangers. I felt so bad; I ran away to a small cave near our home and didn't come back until after dark. I told them a dragon kidnapped me."

The room grows quiet. "Doesn't she know, everyone makes mistakes?" Rebelle asks. "My mother doesn't make mistakes. Or she would always blame it on me."

"Well, we love you the way you are," Celeste says, and I feel tears filling my eyes. I have the best friends, ever. "Maybe Adrien could give you some tips," Rebelle says, giving me a secret wink.

I find Adrien staring me, and as our eyes lock, a sense of peace floods over me. When my hair is done, Celeste gives me a few instructions. "Try not to touch it, and don't wash it for a day or so." "Thank you so much," I tell her, hugging her in the mirror.

"Um, Marinette?" Adrien asks. "Yeah?" His sculpted cheeks have apples on them. Why I can't I look cute like that instead of looking like a tomato?

"You wanna hang out?" Do I squeal? Shout Yes! From the rooftops. Just keep it cool. "Yeah, sure."

Adrien leads me towards the broken wall, and we sneak through. "Thought we could transform in the Subway," he whispers, as we run down the abandoned steps. But instead of going to the "party tunnel" Adrien takes my hand, leading me deeper into the tunnels.

To my amazement, he lifts one of the loose boards, motioning me through. It's pitch black in the tunnel, but somehow, I'm not afraid as the board swings shut leaving us in total darkness. "Tikki?" I open my small coin purse. We transform and my eyes soon adjust do the dim light.

“I had a dream I could fly last night,” I tell Claw, opening my compact on my yo-yo. “How does this thing work anyway?”

The first time I try spinning it, I somehow manage to bonk myself and my partner on the head. “Ow!” “Sorry, sorry!” I rehook my yo-yo. “I think I’ll ask the Supreme.” “Who do you think he is anyway?” Claw asks, then cocks his shoulders, gesturing to the tunnel. “Hey, what to go exploring?” “Don’t you think we’ll get lost?” “I’ll keep you safe.”

Holding hands, we start going in deeper, and I give a little sigh. “Whoever he is, he means business. And this Butterfly brooch, what’s so special about it?” “So many questions, so few answers.”

“How many miles does this go?” I ask. “I’m not sure. Sometimes I….” Claw stops talking, giving my hand a small squeeze. “You can tell me. It’s just us.” “Sometimes I want to run away from my life, be happy, be free.” “Don’t you like school?” “Oh, I don’t mind that. Especially since I met you. But what a adventure it would be….” “Could imagine living down here?” “It’s not like I live down here, but I come here often. Besides you, no one understands me. I have a hard time opening up anyway.”

“It’s nice down here. Despite it being pitch black.” “Yeah,” Claw’s voice is husky, and I feel him brush a lock of loose hair away from my face. Down here in the darkness, my emotions seem to be heightened. “In fact, I want to….” he doesn’t finish as I feel his lips brush against mine, sending sparks. My hands find his shoulders and up into his hair. My own hair is being loosened, falling around my face like two black curtains. “Do you know just how beautiful you are?” I find his hand, giving it a soft squeeze. “Your one of the first to call me beautiful.”

When our legs grow tired, we cuddle together, my head resting on his shoulder, my arm linked through his. Eventually, though it’s time to go.

“Can we come back soon?” I ask, as Claw lifts the board into place, then bounds over to me, placing a gloved hand over my mouth. “Claw, what-” “Keep still.”

And then I hear it. Quiet footsteps, but footsteps, nevertheless. A man in a rich purple suit stares at us, and Claw removes his hand from my mouth, staring back at him. “So, the Supreme has given you the Miraculous to steal back what he thinks is his. You shouldn’t listen to him.”

“Are you the Butterfly holder?” The man smiles a gentle smile or is one disguised of evil. “My name is Hesperia.” He begins to walk towards us, and Claw grabs me and runs.

It’s not until we’re in a alleyway that he sets me back on his feet. “I had to get you out of there before he hurt you.” “How did he know about the tunnels anyway?”

Claw shrugs. “We’ll have to be extra careful now. Who knows who could be listening.” We detransform, heading back to school.

Once back on the lawn, Adrien gives my cheek a little kiss, then strides away across the lawn. I sigh, looking down at my outfit which is now covered in dust and mud. Time for a shower, and I have homework.

The sweet smell of my shampoo calms me, and here in the privacy of the shower, I touch a finger to my lips where Claw kissed me a short time ago.

Hesperia didn’t seem evil, and things don’t add up. One wants back what was stolen, while the other begs us not to trust him. It’s like two magnets being forced together.

I know one thing, if Hesperia is the villain, I’ll need training and good training at that. I want to be a good Ladybug, but I also want to defend myself.

Slipping off into a dream, I’m back in the tunnels, Claw’s hand wrapped around mine. A wicked laugh bounces around us, and the Supreme suddenly appears holding a beaker of green glowing liquid. And then I sit up, heart pounding.

I get out of bed and hurry out the door, hoping to my find my friends. I think I ping-pong match is in order, and I head downstairs.

But when I enter the commons area, I gasp. The Supreme is standing in the middle of floor, staring at me with piercing eyes. “It has come to my attention, that you’ll need training to take back the Miraculous. Meet me at this location on Tuesday after school.”

“We saw him,” I whisper. “Saw who? Speak up, child.” “Hesperia. Down in the tunnels.” The Supreme’s face grows thoughtful. “The tunnels, eh? Are you growing feelings for your partner?” “That’s my business.” He walks over swiftly, taking my chin in his hands. “Look, I didn’t make myself clear. Whoever retrieves the brooch, that shall be the one I will spare.” “Spare? You wouldn’t hurt Adrien!”

“Don’t test me, Marinette.” I shiver. “Don’t hurt him, he’s my best friend.” The Supreme lifts a hand, but before I can figure out what’s going on, a sweeping wave of pain fills my jaw, and my vision grows blurry.

“Tuesday. I’ll see you soon, Toxinelle.” the pain is so intense now, I tumble to the floor, blacking out. I don’t dare test this man’s powers. Not yet, anyway.

Day 7-Guardian Duties

Chapter Summary

Marinette wakes to a sore jaw and finds Adrien in the sick bay with her. But injuries or not, they will have training with The Supreme and even he senses the powerful bond between them.

When I come to, I find myself in the Nurse's office, on a small cot bed. "Well, Marinette, are you not feeling well?" the kind nurse asks, placing a cool washcloth on my forehead. It's not like I can tell her I'm almost hundred percent certain that the Supreme had something to with it.

And my jaw still hurts. I nod my head. "Alright, let's take a look at you." She starts with the normal procedures of a blood pressure check and temperature. But when she places her hands on my face, I gasp aloud, squeaking with pain.

"I'm sorry, Marinette. Did that hurt?" "Yeah." She gives me a strange look. "It's funny though, there's no injury around your jaw area." I feel tears fill my eyes. "Now, now, I believe you. Your friend Adrien is in one of the beds over having similar issues." She smiles at me. "I'll grab some medicine and be back soon."

"Adrien?" I croakily call out, and I can hear the crackly paper of Adrien shifting off the bed. "You, okay? One minute I was working on homework and the next I was on the floor having extreme jaw pain." I rest my head against the crisp white pillow. "The Supreme threatened me." Adrien's eyes widened and flash. "Did he touch you?" I nod. "He pinches my chin, but he was able to use some kind of power that hurt my jaw. He's powerful and dangerous all right." I tell Adrien about our secret training.

"But he hurt you. Maybe we can use our powers…." I take his hand. "We don't have a choice. If we don't do what we're told, things could grow much worse." Adrien sighs. "I'm just sorry your hurt."

If I could laugh I would. It's not his fault. "Why should you be sorry?" Adrien's eyes are soft. "Because I care about you, Marinette."

I slowly sit up, supporting myself against his chest. "Then kiss me." It's a quick kiss and by the time the nurse gets back, Adrien is back in bed.

“Don’t go to class tomorrow, just relax and eat soft food. Your friends with Rebelle and Celeste, aren’t you?” I nod, taking the little white bag of pills. “They can get your homework, and if you feel any worse, come back tomorrow.”

I spend the rest of the evening sketching in bed, having fun with some new colored pencils. I feel lonely without my friends, and I go to bed early.

In the morning, my friends knock on my door. “Ready for breakfast, Miss Invalid?” I rub my jaw, linking arms with my friends. “Hey, at least it isn’t dentition.” “Yeah, to much smooching with you-know-who,” Rebelle giggles. It’s Celeste who looks sympathetic. “Be nice, Rebelle. With a hurt jaw, how will our lovebirds kiss?” I giggle. “Very carefully, and you two are dorks.”

However, Adrien is waiting for us at the entrance. “Oh, here’s Romeo now,” Celeste whispers. “I’ll carry your tray, Marinette. Just tell me what you want,” Adrien tells me. Is this a boy or a prince?

But the loudness of the dining hall causes my head to ache and buzz, and I stand up abruptly, running from the room. And there’s one place where only one person would follow.

“Marinette?” I’m down in the tunnels, and I lift my head when I hear Adrien’s voice. He drops down in front of me, placing his hands on my knees. “Hey, why did you run out like that?” “I just needed to get away.” “Come here,” he tells me, and soon I’m laying across his lap as he strokes my hair, ice pack to my jawline. And then he peers closer at me. “What is it?”

“There’s a small crack right here,” he traces his finger under my chin, traveling up to my jaw. I’m scared. “Do you think it’s serious?” “I’m not sure, but that explains the jaw pain.”

I hide my face in his shirt, and he rubs my back gently. At least here I can escape the world with my partner, but injury or no, I have homework and the visit to the Supreme beckons.

The next day as promised we head to the secret place the Supreme told us about. The pain of our injury is gone, but Adrien isn’t surprised. How could we train well if we’re injured, and I have to say he’s right.

“Is this the place?” Claw asks, and we both stare up at a tradition Chinese looking house. It looks cozy, despite the occupant within is anything but. “Looks like it.”

But the Supreme is all smiles today. “Ah, Toxinelle. Claw. It’s time to start your training.” He leads us t a large room where a row of vases is arranged. “Toxinelle, will start with your yo-yo training.”

It’s harder than it looks as I’m prodded around like a mannequin on how to whirl it up, down, sideways and even overhead. “Good. Now, Claw, if you could step in, please.” Our teacher points towards the vases. “Use your yo-yo to smash the vases, just as hard as you can.”

Of course, being me, I keep missing until my partner steps in. “Think about the object you want to destroy,” his lips whisper in my ear. “Only focus on the sound of voice and the object.”

I start a sideways whirl, then leap forward, and a symphony of musical shattering fills my ears. When I finish, I’m breathing hard. I also feel powerful and dangerous, and I catch Claw staring at me, giving me a flirty wink.

“Claw, your power is more precise, for its immense power could destroy the world. Go ahead and put your hands like this,” Claw cups his hands in a egg shape, one slightly higher than the other. “And say: Cataclysm.”

A swirling ball of black light appears, and I feel like I’m staring into a black hole. “Now expand your hands ever so slowly.” The ball of lights grows bigger and bigger, yawning wide with its open mouth, ready to devour and destroy whatever he may touch. Claw grunts and the Supreme indicates with a nod on what he should destroy.

I rub at my jaw; my face is beginning to ache again. “Hang in there,” Claw cups my face gently. Our next training is sparring against each other with the Supreme critically watching our work. Though Claw is able to back me against the wall, I push him back a little with a kick.

His eyes meet mine as I catch my breath, and his eyes are glowing and dangerous. And so beautiful. “That’s enough for today. Tea before you leave?”

The tea has a slight smoky taste, and though I’m not the biggest tea lover, I find myself enjoying it quite a bit along with the small cookies that melt in my mouth.

“You two are a rare and dynamitic duo. I’ve trained others who could barely stand each other, but your love has a hot spark of mystery and danger.” Claw and I glance at each other, and the Supreme laughs. “Don’t think I’ve failed to see the close bond between you two. But remember, only one of you will be spared.”

Claw stands abruptly, helping me to my fight. “We should be going on.” “I’ll see you soon, Toxinelle. Claw,” our teacher folds his hands into his voluminous robe.

The sky is a watery pink, streaked with mare’s tails as we walk home. Claw nudges me. “Want a bit more practice, Cockroach?” I grin at him. “Only if you like defeat.” “Ooh, them fighting words.”

Working our way through a back alley, I use all my skills that I can remember, but as usual Claw pins against the win. “I win,” he grins, and I glare up at him, trying to catch my breath. Which dries up as I realize how close he is to me, and before I know what’s happening, we’re kissing in the back alley.

Claw breaks away first, resting his forehead against mine. “I can’t lose you,” he whispers. The words “I love you” are on my lips, but it’s way to soon, and I don’t want to scare him off. I detransform, looking to Tikki for information. “Are there past Ladybugs we could ask that have dealt with the Supreme in the past.”

Tikki bobs her head. “Oh, yes, Marinette. But you’ll need a Kwagtama to see her.” Before I can ask what that is, Tikki begins a little dance, spinning up a small circle. “Ppt!” I try not cringe as warm mush settles in my hands before hardening into some kind of resin. “Is this it?” I squeak, and Tikki nods. “I’ll show you how it works later.”

Back at school, I’m hungry and tired, and tonight on the menu it’s pizza. “So, the Louvre? Say, after school?” Adrien asks, brushing his fingers down my cheek as we stand in front of the dining hall doors.

“Are you asking me on a date, Agreste?” I tease. “I believe I am.” “In that case, I accept.” “Great, it’s a date,” Adrien kisses my cheek before disappearing into the crowd.

I load my tray with good food, searching out my girlfriends. “Girl, did you spend the day with Adrien? You lucky thing!”

“Not all day, but some of it.” “He’s so into you.” I nod, biting into my piece. Sure, we’re “into” each other, but now we need to keep each other safe.

I feel like I know him so well, and yet, he’s still a mystery. A soft ding vibrates in my pocket, and I pull out my phone.

Adrien: My father is having dinner, and I told him you'd love to meet him. Should I say your free?
Marinette: Oof, I'm not that good at fancy.
Adrien: Don't worry, I'll protect you.

"What did he want?" Celeste asks. "I'm going to dinner soon at Gabriel Agreste's." "Girl, his home is a mansion! You are so lucky!"

Yeah, lucky. So, why do I feel like I'm about to go into the lion's den?

Day 8-Past Ladybugs

Chapter Summary

Marinette and her classmates visit the Louvre, where she gets some advice from a past holder, but on the way home Adrien is acting different towards Marinette which causes her to worry.

“Three kids and a hamster, yeah,” I mutter in my sleep, pulling my quilt tighter around me. You know the feeling when you have the best dream, and you want to go on forever? “Adrien, you don’t need to wear white, your perfect enough already,” I giggle.

Oh, this dream is vivid as Adrien holds a cute ball of fluff. “Marinette?” I cross my arms as I look to him to the hamster. “No, we aren’t calling it Marinette-”

“Marinette!” The dream shatters like glass shards and Rebelle and Celeste are sitting on my bed. “Girls, I was dreaming about Adrien and hamsters! And why are you in my room at five thirty?” Rebelle snorts. “Adrien was a hamster?” Oh, that’s funny…. “Don’t,” I take my pillow, whacking her. I won’t think of my crush with whiskers especially when he already dons a feline black leather suit.

“Come on, we’re going to the Louvre today! We need to get ready!” I cross my arms. “Says who, and I think I dress great.” “Um, our art teacher? Oh, that’s right, you were hanging out with Lover Boy the other day. Don’t you want to look super cute for him?”

“Okay, okay!” I grab my shower caddy, heading for the bathroom. “I’ll be yours in ten.” I love my outfit for the trip: sensible walking shoes, a blue blouse with a white vest, and white ribbons for my hair. Celeste does a light touch-up of makeup, while Rebelle does my hair.

“If you stand still in enough in the museum, maybe you could pass as a statue. You're so pretty, Marinette.” “Thanks, girls. And it’s seven a.m., meaning it’s time for the most important meal of day!”

A warm bowl of oatmeal suits my needs, but we keep giggling about Oliver and porridge, trying and failing to have British accents. In my backpack I have my lunch and coffee money, plus my sketchpad and pencils.

I board the bus, heart sinking just a little when I don't locate Adrien. "Keep moving, Marinette!" Mrs. Cirrus, my teacher says. Striding to the middle of the bus, I sigh, plopping my backpack down.

Celeste and Rebelle sit across from me, leaning over the aisle. "Don't worry. If he doesn't show, we'll all have fun together."

However, Adrien does make it by a whisker and he's so sweet when he asks for the window seat. He looks pale and tired as the bus pulls away. "You okay?" I whisper. "Up late with homework, and Plagg gave me a Kwagamata. Looks like we'll be able to ask our predecessors about working with the Supreme." I nod, keeping my face neutral. Is it bad I want to ask if other Toxinelle's and Claw Noir's love stories lasted? How old is the Supreme anyway? I mean, he's strong, fit and healthy, but his black hair is showing some streaks of gray.

Thunk. I feel a weight settle onto my shoulder, and I slowly look to my left, trying not to squeal. Adrien's asleep with his head resting on my shoulder! Did he plan it, or is it merely a coincidence? Meh, I'm just going to enjoy it, and I rest my head against his. A feeling of peace swirls around me until we chug up the Pyramid full of art.

Our teacher gives us our instructions, at no point are we to leave the Museum, but if separated from our partners, meet at the gift shop. I link arms with the girls, and Adrien shyly asks to tag along with us.

As well as great art, I'm also looking for the statue my Kwagtama will activate. "What should I be looking for, Tikki?" I whisper. She's hidden in my little coin purse that I carry always now.

"A large statue of a girl who resembles you. You'll know her when you see her." The museum is crowding up and we get pushed apart in the large crowds. I can't see Adrien or the girls, but a large painting of a blue-black sky and swirling stars catches my artist's eye.

However, I seem to have caught the attention of a man with stringy long hair who I find out later is a common thug.

"You have a coin or two for me, Miss?" His voice is gravely, and I shiver slightly, shaking my head. He advances closer. "If you can afford expensive pencils, surely you can help me out!" Before I can fend him off, he pushes me and stumble to the ground. He stands over me, hand out-stretched. "Bag!" he snarls.

“Keep your filthy mitts off her!” Claw’s sliver baton shoots forward, causing the man’s arm to go at a outward angle and he lets out a cry of pain. Claw’s violet eyes have a reddish tint. He keeps a firm hold on the man with his baton. He gives me a silent signal. Transform and hope to get a cord of rope, so we can tie the thug up.

I half-get up, scrambling into a small alcove transforming and calling for my Lucky Charm. Pain shoots through my jaw area again, but I ignore it, tossing my partner a cord of rope from my hiding place. I know he’ll come back to get me when the coast is clear, so I detransform catching my breath.

“I could have cataclysmed the guy,” Claw growls as he joins me. “He claims you fell, and he was just trying to help you up.” I massage my sore arm. “Rotten liar.” “Let me see your arm,” his voice has a air of authority. Claw rolls up my sleeve, massaging my sore arm for a moment. “You're probably going to have a bruise, but you’ll be okay.” “Thanks for rescuing me.” His hand is still on my arm, giving me goosebumps. “Marinette,” he whispers, and he’s kissing me fiercely and I kiss him back with the passion I have. “Have you found the statue yet?”

We crawl out of the alcove, and I can feel the searing heat of Claw’s lips. “No,” I sigh with exasperation, pushing my black hair away. “Marinette! Marinette!” We both glance down at Tikki who’s chirping excitedly.

Looks like the statue was here the whole time. “I’m going to go find mine. Good luck, Cockroach.” Claw bumps fists with me. “Same to you, Fleabag,” I mutter, unhooking my necklace. A ancient looking symbol is underneath the statue and my Kwagtama glows and the room is soon bathed in a pink glow.

“Here, choose her,” Tikki suggests, pointing to a picture of a girl around my own age. When I select the picture, a girl appears, brushing her long black hair while looking into a mirror.

“Hey, who interrupted my beauty routine?” she snaps, and I feel myself blush. She stops, turns to look at me and squeals. “Oh. My. Kwami! Are you in the modern era? You are so lucky!” “Um, yeah. Look, I hate to bother you, but I have questions about the Supreme and my love life?” Ugh, why do I make it come out sounding like a question?! I sound like a total dork!

The girl seems to pale as I mention the Supreme. “He hasn’t been defeated?” A sick feeling churns in my stomach. “He wants the Butterfly Miraculous whatever the cost, and he will only spare me or Claw Noir.” I feel like this girl can see into my very soul. “And you love

him?" I nod. "It's strange, I feel like our love is deeper than that, though we're still getting to know each other." "That's because he's your soulmate. I don't know how to beat the Supreme, Marinette, but I sense a fighting spirit in you."

I laugh shakily. If that were true, Claw wouldn't have to be my knight in shining black leather. "I'm actually a pretty peaceful person." "I didn't mean like that. You fight for what is pure, and noble and good. And you fight for love." "As to crushing on your partner, you're going to find my advice extremely cheesy. Just be yourself."

I smile. "Actually, I'm okay with cheesy." "Celeste, I hear her voice! She's this way!" the girl cocks her head. "Who's that?" "My two best friends." "I should go, but to do so you must end the Reunion." "I hope we meet again. End of reunion."

When the girl fades from view, I feel sad without knowing why. Sure, maybe it wasn't the exact info I needed, but it was genuine and from the heart.

"Marinette, Adrien told us what happened? You, okay?" Rebelle and Celeste wrap me in a hug. "Yeah, I'm okay. In fact, I could use some Starbucks!"

Adrien meets us in the cafe area, but he's quiet not his usual joking self. What did one of the Former Holders tell him?

When we get on the bus, Adrien declines to sit with me, heading to the back of the bus. My heart begins to thump, a sure sign I'm going to cry. Celeste finds my hand. "Come on, let's sit together."

Tears run down my cheeks as I rest against her, and she lets me cry. I don't understand what I could have done wrong or caused Adrien to be upset.

When I ask Tikki about it later in my comfy bed, she sighs. "You and Adrien may be soulmates, but this is new love. Adrien wants to protect you and ask you to be his girlfriend, but he doesn't know the right way how. He's the one who feels like he failed you today, when you got hurt."

"But that wasn't his fault! I'm the clumsy one, me!" My room is suddenly to small and I need to breathe in the cool night air.

Getting out of bed, I hurry down the stairs, heading to the broken wall. If I'm going to make mistakes, one of my first lessons will be learning to fly, and gracefully at that.

"Tikki, Spots On," I whisper, feeling the pink glow envelope me. Then I fade away into the night.

Day 9-Mistakes

Chapter Summary

> Marinette slips away during the night to clear her head, as Adrien seems to be giving her the cold shoulder. With her thoughts elsewhere, she begins to make more mistakes than usual, and she has dinner later at the Agreste's. Will Marinette have her head in the game?

Out in the cool night air, my breathing settles down and my heart rate returns to normal. As long as I'm out here I might as well get a little practice in yo-yo flying. But what's the best place to practice flying?

In the distance, I hear the bells of Notre Dame, and I take off, jogging to the broken wall, slipping through with ease. With my powers I'm not worried about being kidnapped, but this time in Paris is a bit eerie.

The Supreme explained to me that my yo-yo string could go on forever, and I peer up towards the flying buttresses, trying to pinpoint a object that I could latch onto a catapult upwards. A fearsome looking gargoyle peers down at me, and I give a little nod. There's my target.

Clearing my head of Adrien's sudden coolness, I empty all things besides whirling my yo-yo and locking onto my target. Zip! Whirl! Thud! I did it! My string wraps around the object, and I give it a small tug, yelling with exaltation as I fly through the night air. I land Ladybug style on top of the gargoyle's head, slipping off and onto the church roof.

The ground is now miles away, and I feel happy and free up here, leaping and soaring higher and higher where my clumsiness and mistakes can't reach me.

On the very top near the spire, I gaze out at the city, the breath catching in my throat. The Eiffel Tower shimmers brilliantly in the distance, and even the Seine has a sliver shine in the moonlight. I make my way over to the roof, holding out my hands like the world's greatest trapeze artist, and that's when it happens: I slip.

Trying to keep my cool, I toss my yo-yo towards one of the buttresses, groaning when I hear it catch, for now I am dangling in the air like a insect waiting for the spider to descend. Then, I hear sounds I thought I would never hear up here: footsteps then a familiar voice.

“Let go, I’ll catch you, Cockroach!” I give a shaky laugh, clutching my string tighter. “Are you sure I’m not hearing voices?” a chuckle in the night floats up to me. “Better me, then a security guard.” Good point. Shutting my eyes tight, I let go and drop.

I fall into something warm and solid and when I can open my eyes, I find Claw’s eyes glowing at me at me in the darkness. “What are you doing up here, all alone? Even with your powers, that’s a scary fall.”

My face flushes hot, despite the cool night air. “I had to escape, and I figured I’d get some practice with my yo-yo.” He takes my hand. “Come on, I want to show you something.” Curious, I follow him watching as he swings open a small stained-glass window and gestures me inside. My eyes widen as I scramble inside, and he switches on a small light bulb. “Wait, Claw, you already knew about this place?!” Claw shrugs, going over to a small stove and taking down a container of chocolate powder. “I haven’t known about it long, no.”

He’s acting like my partner, like nothing’s happened between us. Is it because he’s not Adrien right now? “Hey, about yesterday-” He whirls on me, eyes glittering with anger. “I don’t want to talk about it, Toxinelle! Okay?” All color drains from my face. “Okay.”

He turns, striding over to me in two short strides. “Marinette,” he whispers, finding my earlobe with his lips, tugging at it. My emotions blur and grow fuzzy. He moves from my ear to my lips, but the kisses are short, too short for me.

The kettle is singing, and he straightens up. “Whip cream?” he asks, pouring the sweetened chocolate into two mugs and I nod.

“I can see why you’d want to escape up here,” he says, quietly. “I’ve heard Golden Hour is spectacular from the roof.” I slide open my compact. “We could wait; it’s almost morning already.” Does the time know how to fly, like I know how to fly? Claw catches my eye, and we scramble upwards towards the roof, arriving just in time to catch the most glorious sunrise I’ve ever seen.

“Oh, by the way, Father’s dinner is tonight,” Claw peeks over at me. Before I can answer, he’s gone, just a black dot headed towards school.

School! And I have gym in…. a half hour! Oh, now it really is time to fly!

As much as I try to hurry, I burst into the gym, red-faced and panting, and let's just say my gym teacher is not happy. "Dupain-Cheng! Get dressed and you're doing the mile! The rest of you, start with sit-ups!"

I change as quick as I can, pulling on my shorts and tank top, pulling up my hair in two cute little buns. Hey, if a wanna-be fashion designer is going to be late, might as well be fashionable!

But of course, my clumsiness trips me up, and I crash, sliding across the gym floor. Cool distance between us or not, Adrien is instantly by my side. "Where does it hurt?" "My ankle," I gasp, and he helps me over to the bleachers. "I'll ask Coach for some wrapping tape."

Though my ankle is already beginning to swell, Adrien's hands make me forget as he wraps my ankle. Just for a second, he's green eyes soften and he plants a kiss on my now bandaged ankle.

It feels like my day is full of mistakes, and I still have dinner to go to at the Agreste's. It's actually a relief when school is over and I can concentrate on getting ready, but I just sit at my vanity. Do I even want to go if Adrien will be icy towards me? A icy claw of fear suddenly grips my mind. Am I being needy, clingy? Is this all my fault?

Digging into the back of my closet, I pull out a old creamy ivory sweater, pairing it with black slacks and nice shoes.

I play with my hands on the way over to the Agreste's, my stomach tied in knots. Adrien apparently is already home, but I thought he would ride over with me. Unless he's going to….No.

"You may head up to Adrien's room to wait for him," a housekeeper says. "I'll call you when dinner's ready."

When I open the door to Adrien's room, it's as grand as the foyer, for everything in the Agreste's is big. A white couch, a TV, and a desk and computer complete the room, complicated by a large grand piano. Has Adrien ever told me he plays?

I wander over to the window, breathing in the rain-cooled air. I turn and squeak as the bathroom door opens and Adrien comes out in shorts, shirtless with a towel hanging around

his neck. For what seems like hours, we stand their staring at each other.

I'm rooted to the spot and couldn't move even if I wanted to. Adrien crosses the room over to me, giving me no greeting but cupping my cheek instead.

"I'm sorry, Marinette," he whispers, staring into my eyes. "When the thug attacked you, I felt like a failure, for I should have protected you better. I've been bitter and harsh, and I feel unworthy of your love. I'm scared, love."

"Adrien, we all make mistakes. Look at me, I've been making them all day. And you did rescue me. Ut even if you didn't, it doesn't mean I love you any less. You don't have to be afraid." He sighs, leaning his forehead against mine. "Marinette, I'm not the perfect boy you think I am. Look." Adrien rubs away at a spot on his cheek, revealing tiny spider-like lines. "They grow every time I use my Cataclysm." I gasp. "That's the exact spot where my jaw hurt. Does this mean...I'll get those lines too?" "Every time you use your Lucky Charm. Or maybe when we least expect it."

"Adrien, I love you, for you. Not for million dollar smile, or that your model. You. And no matter what you look like, I will always love you."

"How did this black cat get so lucky to fall in love with such a awesome girl?" We don't need a answer as Adrien leans forward, brushing his lips against mine. Pressed against the wall, I place my hand on his heart.

His eyes are a ocher green when we part. "And so the Black Cat fell in love with the Ladybug, or the Cockroach," he grins. "What a silly Cat," I answer.

Faintly, we hear the housekeeper calling us down for dinner. "You really should get changed, huh?" I gesture to him. Adrien gives a little yelp, and dashes towards the closet. I giggle, waiting and he finds my hand.

"Ready to meet my father?" he asks, giving my cheek a soft kiss. "Not even a little bit, let's go."

Mr. Agreste is standing in the middle of the foyer, waiting for us. "Marinette, I've heard so many things about you," he smiles at me. "Good things, I hope," I joke. "Adrien told me how you hope to be a designer yourself." I nod my head eagerly.

The meal actually goes better then I expected, and I find myself enjoying myself quite a bit. Though a niggling thought sits in the back of my mind. Is Gabriel putting on a act for me, or is he a nice person?

I excuse myself to the restroom, needing to cool my cheeks. However, instead of finding the restroom, I find myself in a large office space instead, mouth gaping as a painting of Emile Agreste stares back at me.

As if in a trance, I walk over to the painting, running my hands over the painting. “Your son misses you so much,” I whisper. Just then, my fingers connect with some buttons and before I know what’s happening, I find myself in a elevator shaft heading downwards into the blackness below.

Day 10-Diary Entries

Chapter Summary

Marinette now holds a massive secret as she leaves the Agreste's, and she and her friends prepare for a fancy catering event filled with fashion icons.

When the elevator shaft comes to a stop with a soft bump, I can feel my heartbeat in my ears. “Tikki,” I ask in a hushed voice as the door slide open with a soft swoosh, “What is this place?”

Tikki flies in close to me. “I’m not sure, Marinette. I’ve never been here before.”

At first glance, you’d think maybe it’s a garden with all the foliage around, but the stink of swamp water is awful. A long platform like a runway stands before me, and I carefully take one step, leading to a another and another. Something at the end that I can’t quite make out stands at the end. When I get closer, I find it’s a glass cylinder looking thing, tube-like.

My hand is trembling as I place it gently on the object, and as the doors part, I scream. Emile Agreste sits inside, her skin blackened and spider-like, a more severe case then Adrien’s as they criss-cross her body.

Is this the work of the Supreme? “Oxygen levels, 98%,” a elegant computerized voice speaks out. What? If Emile needs oxygen then she’s alive, but barely. Has Gabriel been hiding the truth from his son, the world? Does he knew she’s hanging onto life by a thread?

A soft ding of my phone ricochets me back to reality.

Adrien: Marinette, where are you? Are you okay?
Marinette: Sorry! Locked myself in the bathroom. Be right there!

“Let’s go, Tikki. Their looking for us,” I give Emile one last look, and run. My legs tremble as I slam the office door shut behind me, but thank Lady Luck no one is in the foyer. I pull out my phone again.

Marinette: Where are you?
Adrien: Outside in the garden. I'll come in and get you.

Adrien takes my hand when he finds me. "Father wanted me to see Mother's statue," he explains quietly. "It's out in the garden. We might get a bit wet, but…." his voice trails off. I squeeze his hand gently. "I'd like to see your mother's statue." Adrien smiles, grabbing a umbrella from the stand.

The ground sloshes beneath our feet, but I hardly notice the damp or the cold as Adrien leads me over to the statue. Gabriel is here too, hands quietly behind his back. "I admired her quite a bit," I tell him. "You and Emile helped me develop my loving of sewing." "She may be gone from this world, but she will always be in our hearts," Gabriel says quietly. "I'll be waiting inside."

I watch the lone man slosh through the rain back into the house, no umbrella to shield him from the rain. I turn back, seeing tears in Adrien's eyes as he touches his mother's statue. Suddenly, I see what looks like writing beneath the statue, and kneel in the soft, wet mud.

"Love, your pants!" Adrien yelps, but I ignore him.

"Seek the book and see your powers flourish,
Be warned though, do not become selfish.
Find the cure for time is ticking,
If all fails, I love you, my sunbeam,
Adrien."

Thunder cracks and booms in the sky as I look up at my partner. "I think that poem was written for you, Adrien."

We retreat into the house, and Adrien finds me a oversize sweatshirt and pants as my clothes dry. "Book? What book? And what's this about a cure?"

A cure for Emile, that much is clear to me, I think to myself. I take a deep breath, knowing Adrien either love or hate my next idea. "I think we need to talk to the Supreme about this book." Adrien cuddles his head into the crook of my shoulders. I'm momentarily distracted as his hair smells like peaches. "Why should we trust him, Bluebell? He's tricked us into helping us, and now we're stuck with this curse."

“Yeah, but it doesn’t have to be if we bide our time, and plan carefully. We’re not going to conquer him in a day, Adrien.” “And isn’t funny that you captured my heart as soon as I saw you?”

The spell is only broken as the housekeeper calls its time to get back to school. We’re quiet on the way home, but Adrien’s keeps his arms around me.

I trudge up the stairs, weary and happy as my day turned out so much better then I thought. Rebelle pokes her head out the door, clad in polka-dot pajamas. “How’d the dinner go?”

“Well, we had pasta, and Adrien and I aren’t fighting anymore. In fact, we never were. In was all a misunderstanding.” She smiles at me. “Good. Now, get some sleep, you looked wiped.”

Taking her advice, I crawl into my cozy nest and fall into a dreamless sleep.

Only to be rudely interrupted a two a. m. and grabbing my phone, I streak to the bathroom. Tikki hovers close by, perched on the rim of the bathtub, looking concerned. “You okay?” she asks. “It’s most likely the stomach flu,” I inform her, before leaning over and heaving again. Unless…..No, the Supreme needs me to carry out his mission so he wouldn’t dare poison me.

Once the contents of my stomach are gone, I slowly snatch a blanket from my room and head back into the bathroom, pressing my cheek to the cold tiles of the floor, and feel just a smidge better. My phone chirps, and I look at it with curiosity. Who would be texting me at now three a. m.?

Adrien: Think I have the stomach flu. Help!
Marinette: You too? What did you feed me, Agreste?
Adrien: Only pasta and my love.
Marinette: Will you bring me oatmeal in the morning? Ooh, and a coffee?
Adrien: Who am I, Oliver? Please, love, I want some more porridge.
Marinette: Watch your tail, Fleabag.
Adrien: Ooh, the sassy cockroach has returned!
Marinette: No, she’s only going to hiss at you, then retreat back into slumber.

Adrien, bless him, does bring my oatmeal in the morning and retreats. I spend the day in bed, catching up on diary entries. And sewing.

In the middle of the afternoon, I grow bored and search for my phone.

Marinette: Watcha doing?
Adrien: Reading a Pun manual. Be prepared for puns!
Marinette: Who are you, Scar?
Adrien: Ha, ha, I am a Cat, M'lady.
Marinette: I'm so bored.
Adrien: Wow, and I'm so floored. Get it?
Marinette: Remind me again, why do I like you?
Adrien: Meowch!

Eyes growing droopy, I set down my phone, and promptly fall asleep again.

Two days later, I feel like my old self again, and our nurse deems me fit enough for class. Rebelle and Celeste catch me in a group hug when I come down for breakfast. "Marinette, we missed you!" "I missed you two, girls. You'll-"

I don't get to finish my sentence as Adrien zooms up to me, lifting me into the air. Can anyone say "zoomies?" "Adrien, put me down!" I squeal. "Oops. Sorry."

"Guess what you two," Rebelle grins as we begin to fill our trays. "We get to cater a really fancy fashion show at one of the fanciest hotels in Paris. It's worth a lot of our Home Ec grade!" "Are we serving, or are we actually making the food?" I ask, noticing Adrien just gulped. "What?" "I've never baked before in my life!"

"Seriously?!" my friends and I screech. "Sh! Keep it on the down low!" Celeste giggles as we make our way over to our table. "Good thing we have cooking this morning then." "And I grew up in a bakery, so I know all the tips and tricks!" I bite into my blueberry muffin and take a drink of milk.

When I look over at my girlfriends, I feel their stares boring into me. Adrien's just eating. Typical. "Marinette, that could be a problem," Rebelle says. "Why? A teacher will be present and I know what I'm doing!" I stab my bacon with a little more force in necessary.

"No, Rebelle's right. You and Adrien will be so busy staring into each other's eyes and flirting, your burn the cookies to a crisp!"

I narrow my eyes at my friends. "What do you think we do? Stare at each other and flirt?" "Yes!" their voices chorus together. "Guys!"

After breakfast, it's time for class and Adrien trails my friends and I as we maneuver our way through the hallways.

When class starts, our teacher reminds us about the upcoming event and Adrien gives me a wink. "You look happy," Adrien whispers as we make our way to our cooking station. "You make my heart melt," I boop his nose, then turn around. "Would you be a love and tie my apron strings?"

Adrien does so, eyes twinkling and whispering in my ear. "Did I set your heart at 350?" I laugh. I help Adrien with the wet ingredients as the dry can create a dust cloud. Finally it's time to roll out the dough ball.

"Like this," I hand Adrien the rolling pin, and hold his hands, moving them back and forth. "See, you' you've got it!"

I line the tray with cookies and when I straighten up from putting the pan in the oven, I find Adrien scribbling furiously on a paper towel. What was he writing, the recipe?

"For you, my love," he hands the towel and I read what's scribbled.

"You are my Chocolate to my Chip,
My cookie of happiness.
I could gaze upon you all day,
but then you'd be burned to a crisp!"

-Adrien, aka Furball

"Are you comparing me to a cookie?" I raise my eyebrows as we clean up our station. "That's the way the cookie crumbles." "Oh, My Kwami."

The girls are right, we flirt a lot, but I don't want it any other way, especially when I know the things that I do. The catering event is tomorrow, and Adrien and I must see the Supreme soon. Or maybe he'll find us, and we'll offer him a cookie.

Day 11-Caterer

Chapter Summary

Marinette and her friends attend the fashion event, and Marinette summons up her courage, talking to one of the most famous faces in fashion. Yet Marinette can't let herself get star-struck for she needs to talk to Gabriel, and there's a very familiar face in the crowd.

“Tikki, do you think we’ll be walking the runway?” I ask. “I mean, it is a fashion show after all.”

It’s one thing to dream about the catwalk in the shower, with sweet smelling bubbles, but reality is another thing entirely. “If you want to be a designer, Marinette, you need to face your fears.” I smile at my wise little Kwami as I scrub the bubbles in furiously. “But what if I trip and fail? What if people laugh at me?” “Your friends wouldn’t laugh at you, and either would your boyfriend. If other do laugh, you know they aren’t your true friends.”

“Let’s hope we can stick to passing out cookies,” I shut off the tap and hitch my towel around my waist. I set out my clothes the night before: a scooped buttery yellow dress and white sandals for my feet. Blow-dry my hair and alternating combing it, I scoop my hair up into a bun. I’m just about finished when my friends come in, and Celeste flops on my bed.

“It’s too early to think about fashion and parties,” she moans. “Girl, come here. Let me do your hair for a change,” I grin, wielding a comb. Rebelle giggles. “How much you want to bet Adrien wakes up ready?” I crack up. “Oh, come on. With him being a model, he was probably up before all of us.”

Nerves or not, I’m excited. What we didn’t make in Home Ec for desserts, is being provided by my family’s bakery. And maybe I’ll see my mom today.

“Good morning, Love Bug,” Adrien kisses me good morning before we board the bus. “Hey,” I find his hand. “You look nice.” Though truth be told, he could wear a potato sack and I’m sure it would be on Vogue tomorrow. “My father’s going to be there, you know. Plus, lots of famous designers with their latest collections.” He sighs. “What’s on your mind?” I lower my voice as we find our seats.

“I just don’t want to be mobbed by screaming fans, and….” Adrien’s voice breaks a bit. “I love school, but I’m not like you, Marinette. I don’t know what I want to do.” I give his hand a reassuring squeeze. “And that’s okay. Just because I knew from a young age, doesn’t mean everyone will.”

Adrien’s eyes grow hard. “Tell that to my father. All my life my schedule has been decided for me. What friends to have. I hate it, Marinette.” “Have you told him?” Adrien runs his hands through his hair. “It would be easier to tell him as Claw Noir.” “Oh.” “What?” “So, you wouldn’t want to model for me someday, if I asked?” Adrien leans forward. “I would do anything for you,” his eyes lock on mine.

I lean forward, pressing his lips against mine, and Adrien wraps one of his arms around my waist, pulling me close. It’s hard to break way, but there are so many eyes. I sigh. Maybe I need to brave and talk to his father, stand up for him. And find the cure for his mother. If there’s a poison, there’s always a anti-dote. But is it hidden away at the Supreme’s? Do I need to break in to find the cure?

But I have to shove the thoughts into the back of my mind, for we’re at the hotel. Suddenly, a viscous attack of nerves settles in my stomach, and I feel like I can’t breathe right. “Marinette, look at me.”

I look up into those eyes that I could lose myself in their depths and keep going forever. “You're going to wow them in there today, and I’ll be with you every step of the way.” He holds up a fist. “Besides,” he whispers in my ear before nibbling on the pink shell of my ear, “I don’t think they approve of cockroaches.” I laugh, my face growing as red as well, a cockroach. “Best partner ever.” we bump fists, and I stand up, heading for the exit.

The hotel is swarming with people, but luckily our teacher instructs us on what to do, and where to go. “Now, one of you will be serving the food around, the other will be carrying the drinks. The remainder of your group will stay at the booth.”

“Marinette!” My group says together. “Only if I can have Celeste,” I tell our teacher. Celeste’s sense of humor keeps me calm and it’s nice to have the buddy system.

Soon armed with my tray of cookies, Celeste and I plunge into the crowd. However, it’s not long before I hear a muffled shout, and we turn to look at each other. We seek a peek into where the fashion show will be, and we see a tall lady with blonde hair running her hands through it.

“Why wasn’t I told the buttons and zippers would be faulty? Why they could come loose at any moment.” I be a shy girl expect around my family and friends, but I always carry a emergency mini sewing kit. Before I know what, I’m doing, I find myself walking towards her leaving Celeste with the cookies.

“Excuse me, Ma’am?” The lady turns and peeks over designer shades that probably cost as much as my family’s bakery. She waves her hand at me, like I’m a pesky fly. “Can’t you see I have a fashion crisis on my hands? The show’s today!”

“But I’m a designer, and I assure you, I can fix this!” She takes a second look at me as I pull out my kit. “Well, you may as well try. And you may call me Ms. Wintour.”

My mouth grows drier than the Sahara Desert. As in Anna Wintour? She’s one of the most famous fashion icons in the world! But I have to stay focused, and I begin my task, finding comfort in the rhythm of needle and thread.

Thirty minutes later, though my hands ache, the buttons are secured, and the zippers will zip. “Marvelous! Thank you so much, Miss….” “Marinette Dupain-Cheng. I attend the Paris School of Art and Design.” “Your very talented,” Miss Wintour’s face takes on a thoughtful expression. “Say, would you like to be in the show? I have the most beautiful monarch butterfly dress!”

I say yes immediately, despite my nerves. In the dressing gown, I text Celeste.

Marinette: Big surprise! Make sure to get good seats!
Celeste: Girl, what did you do?

Backstage I feel nervous but excited too. When I come on stage, the spotlight temporarily blinds me, but then I put on a dazzling smile and begin to rock it. I catch a glance of Adrien’s father in the crowd, hoping I’ll be able to catch him after.

But then a face stands out in the crowd, as if no one else exists in this room. The Supreme. Though he is trying to blend in with the crowd, my sharp eyes spot him. I feel like roots have taken control of my feet and I can’t move, and I see him flick his arm, and I spin suddenly on my heel and back into towards the curtain.

“Girl, what did you do?” Rebelle squeals later. I smile shyly. “I just offered a helping hand,” I tell her modestly. “We’re proud of you, Marinette,” Adrien’s eyes are soft. I flush and duck my head.

Then I catch sight of Mr. Agreste weaving his way through the crowd, and I scoot my chair back abruptly. “Where are you going now?” Rebelle calls after me, but I don’t answer, intent on my mission.

“Mr. Agreste!” It’s time like these I don’t like being one of the shorter people in the room, and I fight my way through the crowd. “Mr. Agreste! Gabriel!”

That catches his attention. “Why, Marinette, it’s good to see you,” he smiles at me. But I’m not here for pleasantries. “I need to talk to you,” I begin, feeling my heartbeat fast. “About Adrien.” Instantly, he looks concerned. “By all means, let’s go in here.”

When we find a seat on the bench, I pour out how Adrien is feeling, and though Adrien wants to please his father, he’s not happy. Mr. Agreste sighs, shifting around on the bench.

“Your son would be happier if you spent time with him, instead on those dresses and costumes. After his mother,” I choke, but recover quickly, “died, he’s been more alone than ever. I can only be his girlfriend, but your his father. Which he desperately needs.”

“Marinette,” Mr. Agreste places a warm hand on my shoulder, “Not only are you a talented designer, but you also stand up for the ones you love. But how can I be a good father when I have done so much wrong?”

If it’s a nervous tic, he straightens his tie, and my eyes widen. Underneath is a purple brooch, but not any brooch. A brooch shaped like a butterfly. Then Mr. Agreste looks straight at me. “I should have tried harder to cure Emile, but we wanted a son so bad, we would do anything to get one.”

“Starting with I love you is a good start,” I remind him. But I speak to the empty air for Gabriel is gone.

I close my eyes, feeling the weight of the world settling on my shoulders. I am Emile's chance to be cured, I could release the pain that Gabriel feels, and I could reunite Adrien with his mother.

And the Supreme enters the room. "Impressive for such a shy girl," he folds his hands into his sleeves. Is he talking about my performance, or my chat with Mr. Agreste?

"No matter, you'll need more powers if you are to take back the Butterfly brooch and we shall pay a visit to the Temple of the Guardians."

New powers, or new curses? "We leave at dawn, be ready. Oh, and don't you think about tricking me, Marinette. Adrien wouldn't like the results." My eyes follow him as he leaves the room, my eyes snapping a cold blue fire.

Day 12-Master of Disguise

Chapter Summary

Claw and Toxinelle head to Tibet with the Supreme, and Toxinelle and Claw are faced with their biggest challenge yet.

"Your quiet," Adrien whispers on the bus ride back to school. We're sitting in the back of bus to have a bit more privacy. "Mm-mm," I slip my arm through his, resting my head on his shoulder. "Is fame exhausting, Princess?" I can hear the teasing smile in his voice, and I return it with a smile on my own.

"I was able to talk to your father," I tilt my bluebell eyes upwards so I can look into emerald, green. "Oh?" Genuine surprises flits into his voice. "I'm not sure if anything will change, but I told him you don't want to model." "No, but I know I want to be with you, forever." I close my eyes, so he won't see my guilt.

Guilt that eats away at my diaphragm, wanting to consume me whole. Would he say those words if he knew the secrets I know about the brooch, his mother? Though I can't confirm that Gabriel is indeed Hesperia, it's a spot on description. But why did he poison Emile? Was there some underhanded deal in the darkness of night? Oof, I have more questions than answers. "Adrien, the Supreme was at the event. He talked to me." "What?!" Adrien hisses. "Sh. He said we'll need new powers and we're traveling to the Temple of the Guardians tomorrow. Knowing him, we could or not come back."

Adrien removes his thumb from my hand, where he was stroking my knuckles, up to my hair and playing with it instead. "Then there's something I must do tonight. Could be ready, say, eight?"

"First of all, my hair is not a ball of string, and yes, I can be ready. What are you planning, Agreste?" Oh, his smile could melt cold butter and I'm putty in his arms. "Curiosity killed the cat, Princess." "Don't give me any ideas. Here, let me try something. Slump down a little."

Adrien does as I request, his eyes smirking with mirth. "Tsk, tsk, such bad posture, and you want to be a designer," he's at my same height now, having easy access to kiss my nose. I

sigh, threading my hands into his hair and scratching his scalp with my nails. Adrien gives a sigh of pleasure, cuddling up to me. “You don’t know how wonderful that is,” he tells me.

It makes me wonder. Besides me, how often does this boy get hugs? Back in the dorms, I change out my fancy clothes and flop down for a nap and to write in my diary.

When I wake up, it is nearly time for Adrien’s surprise and I select a simpler midnight blue dress, heading out to where the gardens are located.

“This better be good,” I hug him. “I missed dinner because you said dinner would be provided.” Adrien smiles. “Come with me, Marinette.”

There’s a hidden spot in the garden, and the best way I can describe it is it’s like a secret garden, cut off from prying eyes. I gasp in delight as I step through, seeing a elegant table set for two, complete with candles.

“I know we’re practically dating and boyfriend and girlfriend,” Adrien blushes. “But I figured I’d better make it official.”

I enjoy some bread from the breadbasket and the main course turns out to be lasagna. “So, Temple of the Guardians, huh?” Adrien asks. “Maybe they’ll be able to help us. Where is this place anyway?” Adrien takes a drink of sparkling apple juice. “There was a story on the news about it before I came to school. Apparently, the place had burned down, but not that long ago, the place was miraculously restored.”

I feel a slight chill go through me that has nothing to do with the night air or my wrap. “Adrien, you don’t think the Supreme burned the Temple, did you? Apparently, this book will help with our powers.”

“Or help the Supreme elevate is.”

All I need is five minutes, I think to myself. To ask about Emile and find the anti-dote. If I’m not too late already. “Marinette?” My head jerks up, finding Adrien staring at me. “Your right beside me, but yet I feel like a ocean of distance is between us.”

His words remind me of that Adele song: “There’s such a distance between us….” But if Adrien knew what secrets I’m keeping from him, I wouldn’t be sitting here. “Sorry. I’m in the moment.”

“Alright then,” Adrien stands and so do I. “Marinette, I should have asked you this sooner…” he slips a pink promise ring on my finger. “Will you be my girlfriend with and without a mask?”

If I were any other girl, I’d be the happiest girl on earth. But I simply say, “Yes.” Thankfully, it’s good enough for him, and music from some hidden speaker begins to play. “May I have this dance?” He gives me a playful bow. I smile, my heart lifting. “You may.”

During the night, I have a nightmare about Adrien, and as we need to get up at dawn, I change as fast as I can, throwing myself into his arms. “I dreamt I couldn’t find you,” I murmur, my head cradled against his chest. “I dreamed you had to leave Paris.” Adrien finds my hands to kiss. “I would never leave without you, My Lady.”

“Ah, your both here, put these on, for it’s time to go.” The Supreme has appeared along with a cold mist and Adrien helps me put it on. He takes his time making sure my hood is secure. “You warm enough? Comfortable?”

The Supreme claps his hands sharply. “Hurry it up, you two.” He opens a shimmering portal and turns back to us. “Transform and let’s go.” We do so, and Claw holds my hand as we walk through the portal. We were right to put on your cloaks before we left, for we seem to be in some kind of mountain range. We aren’t in Paris anymore, that’s for sure. A stone staircase that seems to spiral up towards the sky is nearby.

“When we get to the Temple, let me do the talking,” he says. I gasp softly as with a blink he disguises himself, his crinkled face now smooth.

The higher we go, the colder it gets, and I feel myself becoming numb, despite my suit. Claw turns to me with a look of concern. “Love, your lips are blue!” I want to mumble that I feel half-frozen, but I can’t even talk. Claw scoops me into his arms gently turning to our Leader.

Bang! Bang! Bang! The dragon on the giant red door has been knocked upon, and we wait out here in the blue dark.

“Oh, my goodness, travelers! Is your partner alright?” A man in a red robe opens the door wide. “Please, she needs hot food and a warm fire,” Claw says, ignoring what the Supreme said.

“This way,” he welcomes us with a gentle smile, and I instantly know this is a place of peace. When Claw tries to set me by the fire, I cling to him. Sure, it’s peaceful here, but I’m scared and cold. What if they try to separate us?

Bowls of hot soup and cider are provided, and at last I thaw out and relax. “I wanted to show my students the Temple,” the Supreme says. “Of course. It’s good to see such a close pairing of a Ladybug and a Black Cat for I have seen to many who only want power.”

It’s not us who want power, it’s the Supreme! I want to shout but keep silent. “I will show you everything in due time, but you must be exhausted. Our rooms are small, but….”

“My students are ready for the Separation test,” The Supreme’s voice is firm. “Separation test?” Claw and I echo together. “You’ll both be in a large circular room, but you won’t communicate or be in contact with each other for a full 24 hrs. All the holders before you have done it and come out stronger.”

The test sounds awful, but if that is needed to be done, then so be it. Maybe I can even sneak away and ask someone here about Emile, the poison, the antidote…

“Toxinelle, they’re waiting for us,” Claw says. His look says, where are you? I mask my emotions quickly, before my partner can realize my secrets. “Yes, yes. Of course.”

“Blots Off.”

My room is small, but cozy and comfortable and snuggle down into the covers with Tikki. Can I do this test alone?

“Marinette, you brought your Kwagtama, correct?” I hold up my necklace where the charm is hanging around my neck. “I keep it here, always.” She gives a excited chirp. “I’ll be back!” she zooms through the door before I can stop here, and I watch her leave in confusion. Leaning against the pillow, my eyes grow heavy, Tikki is in no danger here.

In the morning, we’re given a breakfast in our room, and I build up my strength, sipping on the most delicious coffee and cream I’ve ever had.

We'll be given meals at regular intervals, but we must not speak to each other. We're allowed to take one item, and I choose my diary, making sure my pen is firmly attached to the book.

The "room" is growing out of a large tree with a circle pond in the middle, and if this we're any other place, I would deem it beautiful.

"We will give you some privacy, and then the test will begin," our hosts says.

We wait until they are gone, and Tikki flies out of my bag. "Adrien, give Marinette your Kwagatma." I shrug as Adrien gives me a confused look but does what Tikki asks.

"Don't worry, we'll be fine, Cockroach." "Yeah," is the only words I can muster before I am pulled into my partner's arms, and we cling to each other before we kiss.

A gong sounds and we break apart. Looks like our test has begun.

Day 13-Weight of The World

Chapter Summary

Claw and Toxinelle face the Separation Test, but Marinette must seek answers about Emile. But how can she be in two places at the same time?

At first, this test seems to be going well, and we even have two tables laden with food and drink. It's the isolation that's getting to me, even though my partner is right on the other side of the pond. Can the Testers see us?

Claw is huddled up in a small ball, but I don't think he's sad, he loves napping in the sunshine. A ache settles into my chest. What if I wrong? What if he does need comforting? Nikki keeps darting at my Kwagtama and I hand it over to her. "Lay here, Marinette," she instructs and I do as I'm told.

Nikki zooms off to Adrien's, carrying back his Kwamagta. "Set yours next to Adrien's," she says and I notice as they touch they begin to glow. I brush my fingers over them, and I find them hot to the touch.

But more importantly, I feel a peace wave of euphoria gently crashing over my mind. Claw stirs suddenly, walking over to as close to the edge of a pond as he dares. I'm right on the other side and a lily pad floats by, it's beautiful flower opening before our eyes.

"I'd like to pick that flower. It would be lovely in your hair." My head jerks up and look at my partner. "Claw, are you inside my head? In my thoughts?"

I can hear the grin in his inner voice. It appears so, love. "But how" I look at the Kwagatma's still glowing. Tikki came and explained to me last night that when the two Kwagtama's are merged together, we can hear each other's thoughts.

I smile, blowing him a kiss. He gives a playful wink. “See, even in silence we can outsmart the Supreme.” “Claw, I need to leave. I have so many questions here.” “Now that we’re in each other’s thoughts, this challenge will be a breeze.” “No, Claw, time is of the essence, I must go…” I can feel his mood shifting, changing. “You’ve been keeping secrets from me, haven’t you? That’s why you lapse into long periods of silence.” I sigh, angry at myself. I should have known he knew I was keeping things from him. “And I can’t share them with you. Just know…” the breath catches in my throat and I feel like I’m choking. “It’s about your mother.”

Claw’s head jerks up. “My mother?” “Yes. Love, you have to help me find a disguise of my own before it’s to late.” “Well, what about your Lucky Charm?” “That could work, but the charms have been so simple so far.” Claw stews on that for a long time. “Maybe that’s because we’re playing it safe, so we end up with safe.”

Tikki interrupts our conversation by butting her head against my arm. I cup my hands, letting her sit in my palms. “What is it, Little One?” “Try the ice blue macaroon. You’ll gain water powers and Claw will help you once your under the water. Don’t worry, you’ll still be able to communicate clearly.”

The macaroon has a icy taste, but it’s good. “Now, Marinette, say, “Aqua Tikki, Blots On!” I do as I’m told, finding I have water powers and dived into the cool aquamarine colored waters. Once under, I call for my Lucky Charm, scuttling quickly away when I see a copy of myself staring back at me. Well, a copy of myself as Marinette that is. And then it clicks. As long as “I” stay in the room, I won’t fail my challenge.

“Princess?” “I’m here.” “Plagg is saying that if you look below you, you will see a pipe. Do you see it?” I swim down, deeper into the pool. A funnel like pipe towers upwards with a large yawning opening before me. “Yes.” “To get back into the Temple, you’ll need to swim through it. Up here you’ll certainly be detected.”

I wish I could take a breath, but I would only take on water, so I summon up my courage, and swim towards the opening. The water is blacker in here, colder. And I’m so tired, so very tired. But I must press on.

Soon I hit a “fork” and tread water wondering what path to take. “Claw?” Bubbles escape my mouth, but I get a solid wall of only my own thoughts whizzing around my brain. Our communication must only go so far. I pick the left fork, for it seems to be traveling upwards, just the way I want to go.

I break the surface, shivering on a tiny ledge, detransforming. “Tikki, what happened to my powers, and why I am so tired?” “You used more of your mental energy then ever, Marinette. Rest now, and we’ll continue our way soon.”

I close my eyes, sending a tendril of thought towards Claw, but still I get a wall of silence. I get to my feet slowly, even if my legs wobble. “Let’s go,” If I could see my eyes could see them blazing with determination? Opening my compact, I see myself and skid to a stop. “Is that me?” I whisper, and Tikki nods. “Come on, the sooner we find someone who has answers, the sooner Adrien can be happier.”

I find a ladder and ascend a ladder, and find myself in a spacious room with a fireplace. A Guardian has their back to me, sleeping in a cozy looking chair. I walk over to the Guardian and gently shake their shoulder.

“Good heavens, dear! What happened to you?” I put a finger to my lips, issuing them to follow me into the sewer. “I used a Lucky Charm to make a duplicate copy of myself so the Supreme wouldn’t be under suspicion.”

He grabs my arm. “The Supreme is here? Now?” Oops. Was this a “I’m-taking-you-undercover-and-don’t-blow-it” situation? “He must be after the Grimore.” I give him a blank expression and he smiles. “I’m getting ahead of myself. My name is Orion.” “Toxinelle, otherwise known as Marinette.” “Pleased to meet you. The Grimore is where all the secret powers of the Miraculous are stored. If the Supreme got his hands on it, who knows what could happen.”

I explain my story and Adrien’s, and I explain about his mom. “If she’s been poisoned, I need to find a antidote, and well, my Kwami and I thought maybe someone from here could help me.”

“You love this Adrien very much, don’t you?” I nod. “He’s my soulmate. He doesn’t know what I know, for it was accident when I found the elevator shaft.”

“Marinette,” Oh, no. “Marinette, I’m afraid we have no cure for Emile. I’m so sorry.” Tears fill my eyes, and I speak through a lump in my throat. “I understand. Could you give me a moment?”

I walk around the corner, sliding down feeling numb. The hope, the plan, everything is gone. Tears blur at my eyes. “I failed, Tikki. What do I do now?” I don’t wait for a answer. Instead, I rise up, wipe my eyes and find the Guardian.

“I need to go back to the Test, please.” He’s able to open a portal, and as soon as I walk through, Claw scoops me up in his arms. “Cockroach, we did it! We survived the test!” “That’s great,” my words are barely audible. Claw looks concerned. “What’s wrong?” “Please, not now.”

“Claw, Toxinelle?” We turn, finding the Supreme watching us. “It’s time to go.”

Back in my cozy dorm room, I feel anything but happy. Just because I failed, means that I’m giving up. A hundred plans race through my mind, each wilder then the last.

Should I go to my best friends for help? Entrust them with my secret? I need sleep, and I crawl under the covers. Everything will be easier with fresh eyes.

Once dawn is peeking through my window, I rise, transforming and heading to Notre Dame. But this time, I don’t fall when I head to the rooftops.

“Hey,” A soft voice says, and I look up. “Claw?” “Whatever secret your holding is massively weighing you down, and I just want you to know…” he has to clear his throat several times. “I’m here for you.”

I find myself in my partner’s arms as the sun rises, the most beautiful Golden Hour. “Adrien, I feel like I have the weight of the world on my shoulders, and I’m wondering if it’s to much to bear.”

He kisses my forehead. “My Lady, that’s why we share the burden.” “Adrien,” tears slip down my cheeks. “It’s about your mother.” “Daggers In.” Adrien’s face is pale. “Is my mother…” “She’s still alive.”

Like the gargoyles, my boyfriend is now a statue. “How? Where?” “She was poisoned. I saw her at the dinner at your father’s house. It was accident, I didn’t mean to see anything.”

“Well,” Adrien speaks slowly and carefully. “This changes everything.” Fear shoots through me, icy and cold. “With us?” “No. I understand now. If you can’t save her, you didn’t want to bring me false hope.” I nod.

“I even tried to find a anti-dote at the Temple, but they didn’t have a solution. However, that doesn’t mean I’m giving up.”

“You know, we’re on spring break this week. Maybe we can do some sleuthing.” “Adrien,” I turn to him. “Do you think it’s up to us to find the anti-dote?” He sighs, stroking my hair. “Looks like it, Bugaboo.”

I find his hand. “Will you come home with me, meet my father, my mother?” “Of course. We do get to have fun too, though, right?” I laugh for what feels like the first time in forever. “Yes.” “Good. Do you like Mario Kart?”

Oh, I knew there was a reason I fell in love with this boy. “Prepared to be creamed, Agreste.” Adrien’s face pretends to be shocked. “M’lady, I may be a cat, but I’m not Scar!”

Through my laughter, the weight of the world is slowly lifting. I don’t have to be Atlas, for Adrien and I will share this weight side by side.

Day 14-Just A Kid

Chapter Summary

> Whether or not Marinette is studying fashion or being a superhero, everyone deserves a break now and then.

"Thanks for helping me pick out the flowers, Grandma. I know I'm on spring break, but we still have homework." Grandma laughs as I make let out a sigh and make a face. "I was in school once too, you know. And isn't your handsome boyfriend coming for dinner later?" I try to hide my blush in my flowers. "You'll love him, Grandma. I feel like we've known each other forever."

When we get home, I up to my cozy attic room. Despite my grumbles, I'm actually really excited about this assignment, where you have to come up with a original art piece using everyday household objects or flowers.

Tikki watches with interest as I set things for drying the flowers. "And once their dry, you'll use them with paint?" she asks. "Partially. I'll sketch out a dress in charcoal and fill in the flower pattern then."

I'm soon hard at work, but with the flowers and the spring air tangling the curtains, I feel happy and relaxed. With a small jolt I realize someday and someday soon, I'll be either running my own company or getting coffee for a famous designer.

Tumbling down into deep thought, I wonder...Is this what I truly what? Or would I make Adrien happier by having a family and settling down? It's not like you can't do fashion.

"What am I thinking?" I look at Tikki, sliding back a little in my chair. "I'm not even married to Adrien yet." "When the right time comes, Marinette. He'll know."

"Marinette! Your friend is here!" Ah, my Prince Charming has arrived! I scamper downstairs and Adrien opens his arms for a hug which I leap into with a small squeal of happiness. "I missed you so much, Princess!" he closes his arms around me, and kisses the top of my head. "I really don't like being apart from you much," I confess as he lets go, but I keep his fingers. "Oh! Grandma, this is Adrien, my boyfriend."

Adrien gives a shy little grin, that couldn't be any cuter. "Hi, Grandma." "Oh, Marinette, he's a angel!" Good thing I'm not eating, or I would have choked as Adrien gives me a sly wink. "Come see my room?" I wonder how pink my face is.

When we're in the safety of room, Adrien smiles. "What did you? Tear up a flower garden?" he points to my messy workstation, also known as my desk. I cross my arms as he stands there, grinning. "I'll have you know, Agreste, I'm getting ahead of next week's assignment. And for your information, it's cats like you who dig up flower beds."

He walks closer, invading my pool of sunlight. "Cats like me, huh?" he brushes his nose against mine. "What if I was looking for my friend, the cockroach?" "Cut the yap, silly cat, and kiss me." Adrien does so, a slow and building kiss until I forget where I am, and who I am….

When we break apart, he looks serious. "I started next week's assignment too, but it's the one you hate." I hide my head in his chest. "Why do you have to bring that one up?"

Our second assignment is giving a oral report on a fashion piece we've put together, whether it's on a article of clothing or a written report. "I hate public speaking," my voice is muffled. Adrien laughs. "And yet you're so good at speaking to me. Or is it insulting?" "Hey, love you, but don't push it. Say, you want to help me make a snack?"

His grin grows bigger. "Is it cookies?" "Yes, we can make more cookies, but I was wanting to make some lemonade." "Lead the way. Actually, hold on."

Good thing Grandma and Grandpa are helping at the bakery and are out of the house, because I let out a surprised shriek when Adrien transforms, throws me over his shoulder and carries me down the stairs.

"Claw! Put me down!" I try to wiggle but that's no good. "Your wish, my command, Princess." He goes to set me down on the couch, but I pull him down with me. "I win, oof!" He grins. "You were saying?" "Off!" "Not a chance." Oh, this boy. His lips are so close, and his breath is making me dizzy. What does the boy do, inhale flowers and boom! Instant cologne. I'm greedy as I tangle my hands in his hair.

"Ufm, Priwncess?" "Not now. Kissing." "What about the snacks?" I push him off of me, sitting up. "Fine."

I set him to the task of cutting the lemons while I make the cookie batter dough. I glance up at him, and blush, our eyes locking. Then I get a idea. “Hey, Claw?” I keep my voice light, nonchalant so he won’t expect I’m up to something. “Yeah?” “Can you hand me a wedge of lemon?”

Hiding my lemon, I walk over to him. “Close your eyes,” I whisper, brushing his hand. “Um, okay.” “Now, how about a little kiss?” Just as he goes in for the pucker, I hold the lemon to his lips. “Ugh, sour!”

I crack up. “Hey, Claw! Don’t be a sour-puss!” We chase each other around the island, breathless and giggling. But as usual, I forget what direction to run, and I feel him catch me. “Let’s have a real kiss, shall we, Princess?” his eyes are bright, happy. Ugh, lemon, blech!

I help with the sugar once the pan is in the oven. “Don’t know when I’ve had that much fun,” Claw wraps his arms around my waist as we lean against the counter. “Me either. We really are made for each other, aren’t we?” Claw nods, playing with my ring finger with my present is.

“Princess, what are we going to do about the Supreme?” I sigh, the fun draining away as reality storms back in. “He’s the one who deserved the poison, not your mother.” His hand cups my cheek. “You know, to find a anti-dote, we’ll need to take a blood sample.”

“Science is not my best subject, love.” How does he keep a straight face when he teases? “Yeah, it’s kissing,” he mumbles.

The kitchen is filled with sunlight, love and the warm smell cookies. “One step at a time.”

After snack, we play Mario Kart, and head upstairs again. I pat the window seat. “Wanna cuddle?” His arms are a refuge. “You know, if we didn’t have to save the world, I’d marry you right after graduation.”

The breath catches in my throat. “Would you want a family, or would you want me in fashion?” “I’ve always dreamed of a family. But I will leave that decision up to you.”

Argh, he’s not going to make this easy on me, is he? I’d rather he’d tell me yes or no. “Adrien, do you think we’ll live that long?” His voice is hoarse as he finds my lips. “Whatever happens, we’ll be together.”

Though Grandma met Adrien earlier, Grandpa gives him a “harumph”. “He’s cute, but does he play chess?” Adrien steps forward. “Actually, I do.”

A hour or so, Grandpa looks up at him in amazement. “Well done, my boy!” Adrien stands up, shaking his hand. “It was so lovely meet you. But I should be getting home. Marinette, would you walk me out?”

It’s twilight as we stop under a lamppost. “Hey, Princess?” “Yes?” “Enjoy spring break. I’ll find a time you can come over. Goodnight, Marinette.”

Our kiss is sweet as we linger, Adrien pulling away with a gentle smile. “I really enjoyed today, love.”

Back at home, I’m not able to sleep so I make myself a cup of cocoa and start to work on the dreaded assignment. Maybe I’ll practice it on Adrien. My phone buzzes around midnight and I find texts from both of my friends.

Celeste: How’s break treating you?
Rebelle: Can we come see you soon?

Marinette: It’s treating me well, thanks. How about a sleepover soon? I’ll let you know soon.

Another text chimes just as I’m about to put the phone down.

Adrien: Hey, love? My relatives are coming, and I’d love you to meet them.
Marinette: Who is it, the Big Bad Wolf?
Adrien: No, but my cousin can be awful serious, and your good with jokes.
Marinette: I’m shocked, Fleabag. I thought you had that department sewed up.
Adrien: Are you trying to show me up? Or sew up?
Marinette: You never stop, do you, Kitty?
Adrien: Never going to stop, until I flop!
Marinette: How about you flop into bed? I’m exhausted.
Adrien: I will see you in the meow-morning.

I snort, and crawl under the covers. Even after midnight, he can be as silly as ever. And maybe...maybe Adrien can see that I need the silliness right now, need the kisses and flirting as our next tasks will be difficult and daunting.

“Good night, Tikki.”

My phone buzzes in the morning, and my hand feels around for it, as I am burrowed under the covers.

Adrien: Thought we could grab a early morning hot chocolate and take a walk.
Marinette: You know how to make me happy, don't you?
Adrien: Is hot chocolate the way to your heart, my love? That seems all to easy.
Marinette: No, it's coffee. And you had my heart a long time ago.

I shower and dress quickly, pulling my hair into a cute ponytail, selecting a soft blue sweater and jeans.

When Adrien rings the bell, I leap to answer it. Raindrops patter against his umbrella. "Good morning, Princess." His eyes are a darker green this morning, and I shut the door scooting under the umbrella. "Good morning, my Prince."

We start to walk towards Starbucks, but Adrien tugs on my arm, taking a short detour. "In here, love." Under a awning in the alleyway, the rain pours down around us in buckets as we kiss, happy and now very wet.

But I couldn't care in the slightest. After all, I'm just a kid.

Day 15-Relatives

Chapter Summary

> Adrien invites Marinette over for moral support when his relatives arrive, or does Adrien just want to be a pill?

"Sorry," Adrien's cheeks are a soft pink, "I'm going to get you sopping wet before we even reach Starbucks."

Sure, the rain is cold, but I hardly feel it as I bask in the glow of Adrien's love for me. "I don't mind. Come on."

After getting our drinks, Adrien finds us a back table. "My cousin Felix is a perfection, and I know my father would like me to be more like him," Adrien sighs. "Hey," I tousle his wet, floppy hair. "I think your perfect just the way you are." Adrien hides himself in his cocoa mug. "Thanks, but he's the youngest graduate ever, a champion fencer and chess player…." "Whoa. No wonder you wanted my help." Adrien gives me a pleading look. "I admit, I should have said I needed moral support from the start." I laugh. "Hey, knock him out with some pawesome puns. Oh, shoot."

Adrien's grin is about a mile long as he pecks my cheek. "See, this is the reason I fell in love with you. You're seeing the light of puns!" "Alleluia," I grumble. "Hey, Marinette?" I sigh. "Why are you being so bashful today?" "I don't know. I'm in a mood. You want to head to the park; you know with the small gazebo?" "Okay."

Once there, we huddle together for warmth and cuddling. "So, how's the oral homework going?" the teasing tone is back, and I'm very glad to hear it. "I worked on it last night, when I couldn't sleep." "Soo," his breath tickles my ear. "So what?" I fold my arms, knowing I look like a grump.

"Do I get to hear it?" "Not on your life! You know how shy I am!" "Um, Princess?" I get up, hoping steam isn't coming out of my ears. "Yes?" My teeth are clenched. "I have nine."

I hit the roof. "My, my, someone's a hissing Cockroach!" "You...you…" "Cat got your tongue?" "Go take a time-out!" I point to the bench. "Go." "Meow right. Daggers Out."

Okay, Marinette, calm down before you really blow a fuse. When I turn back, Adrien is hanging up from a call. “The relatives?” “No, Father has challenged me to a game of foosball.” “Oh, this I have to see.”

I think I hurt my stomach laughing as I Zoomed in the game for Rebelle and Celeste to see. The ball flew back and forth, but so did the jokes. And it makes me wonder, where did this new and improved Gabriel come from? Did my little talk at the fashion event help that much?

“Marinette, Adrien tells me your doing oral reports on fashion. I’d love to hear...Marinette, my dear, you're looking very red. Do you need some water?” “I’ll be back,” I squeak, stomping off to the bathroom. “That fur ball’s going to get it.”

I stomp into the bathroom, splashing water on my face to cool my hot cheeks. Tikki darts out of my bag. “You know, if you really want to get him back, Marinette, you should use Claw’s most hated enemy.” I shoot her a confused look. “The Supreme?” “No, water.”

A diabolical smile spreads across my face. “Oh, Tikki, you are wicked.” I pull out my phone.

Marinette: Adrien, I think I stubbed my toe. Can you come help me? I give Tikki a wink and she giggles.

Two seconds later the door opens, and I let the water fly.

All chaos breaks out and I’ve never had so much fun. Adrien wipes water from his bangs, (Okay, I’m trying to mess up his hair he still looks like he’s doing a fluffing shampoo commercial!) eyes twinkling with mirth. “You...you monster!”

I shrug my shoulders in a flirty way. “Nope, just a Cockroach. Adrien, what are you...eek!” “I win, Bugaboo,” Adrien smirks as I failed to realize I stepped into the shower and he turns on the water, leaving soaked even after one second.

“You better have some dry clothes,” I wipe the water from my eyes. “I’ll go fetch them.”

When I’m dry and “clean” I walk out into Adrien’s room, realizing Adrien and I are no longer alone. However, as I look to Adrien and the assumed cousin, I feel like I’m staring in a mirror.

“Adrien, you didn’t tell me you had a twin cousin!” “He didn’t?” The boy has a English accent. “Marinette,” I extend my hand. “Felix.” “I hear your quite the chess player.” Felix perks up. “You play?”

Oh, I play games all right, but lately it’s win or lose the flirting contest. “No.” “Shame. Say, are you fond of scones and tea?” he perks up. My stomach growls, and I realize that I’m ravenous. “Sounds amazing.”

Though after a half hour, I can see where Adrien needed my “moral support.” I nudge Adrien’s arm. “Hey, how do you turn off the brags?” Adrien smiles back at me. “Well, we do have to do some sleuthing.” “I’m in.” Felix cuts off, mid-chatter, narrowing his eyes at us.

“What are you two whispering about?” “Nothing!” we chorus together. “We’ll be back later, Felix. Nice chatting with you!” “Thanks,” Adrien whispers as we head down to the foyer. I hold up a fist for a “pound it.” “What are partners for?”

We slow down when we reach the bottom of the staircase, and Adrien takes me by the hand. “Don’t worry, Father is out with Aunt Amelie. But we still need to be cautious.”

As Adrien opens the door slowly, I can feel the little hairs standing up on the back of my neck. “Coast is clear, let’s go.”

We head over to the painting of Emile, and I graze my fingers over it, locating the buttons. I give a little squeak of surprise as the shaft opens and we begin to descend downwards.

“My mother is down here?” Adrien asks as the doors open. “Yes. Adrien, if we’re going to save her, we have to do this.”

Adrien holds my hand tightly as we walk across the platform, and he comes to a stop at the foot of the tube? Coffin? The glass panels opens, and Adrien gives a cry, sending him to his knees. I kneel down beside him. He buries his face in my shoulder. “I don’t think I can do this.” “No one said you had to. Do you have the needle and vial?”

With shaking hands, and Adrien hands over the tools and I stand up on wobbly legs. I have to open the coffin to take a sample, and the smell of poison is truly awful. But I do it, sticking the needle in, feeling myself grower sicker and sicker. Once the task is done, I bandage the arm, then turn to find something to hurl into.

“Here.” I turn, bumping into Adrien’s chest as he holds out his hands for the vial. Then sickness takes over and I run to the nearest bush.

I hear the sounds of shuffling behind me and a “Plagg, Daggers Out.” I turn, gasping in horror as Hesperia stands by Emile’s chamber. “Tikki, Blots On.” I unhook my yo-yo, and begin to whirl it, the yo-yo making a sound like a angry hornet, and I hope to ward off this intruder.

“If we don’t find the anti-dote soon, she’ll die,” I tell him. Hesperia searches our faces with a sad expression. “I know, Toxinelle.” My yo-yo stops. “You do.” “I know, because she is my wife. Light wings fall.”

With a flash of purple light, Gabriel Agreste stands before us. “I am not your enemy, rather the Supreme is. He will stop at nothing at getting absolute power.” Claw steps forward. “Then why give us our Miraculous?”

“To use you as pawns, then discard you when he succeeds.” “But what can we do?” I whisper. “He’ll destroy us if we don’t obey.” “You may not know the cure for Emile, and neither do I,” he tells us, and I feel a tear slip down my cheek.

“So, that’s it?” Claw’s voice is harsh. “You have all the time in the world to save her, but instead you make dresses and costumes?” Gabriel rears back his head, surprised. “How could you possibly know that?”

Claw bows his head, letting go of my hand. “Plagg, Daggers In.” Adrien stands before his father, and you could hear a pin drop. “Adrien?” “Please try to save her, Father. I…”

Adrien doesn’t need to say anymore as his father holds out his arms for a hug. I wipe at my eyes, and Gabriel smiles over at me. “Blots Off.” “Marinette?” I run into his arms. “Don’t worry, I’ll find a cure. Meanwhile, you must not let the Supreme know you suspect a thing or know who I am.”

Adrien steps back, smiling at me. “Don’t worry, Marinette and I are good at flying under the radar.”

So, my shyness and clumsiness are to work for my advantage after all. “Come on, let’s go.”

It’s been quite a exhausting day, and after a nap at home, I text my friends.

Marinette: Let’s ask the Supreme for more training sessions. We’re going to need it.
Adrien: Good call. Plus, the tea and scones are yummy.
Marinette: Only you would think of food when we should be training.
Adrien: Tomorrow?
Marinette: Tomorrow. Starbucks first.

I open a new text chain after finishing with Adrien, texting my girlfriends for a sleepover tomorrow night. I'm going to need to relax, and after all, this is spring break.

Then, I head downstairs to find my grandma. "Grandma, can we sew together?" She smiles at me. "Why, I thought you'd never ask!" I give her a hug. "My friends are great, but your family." Her eyes twinkle. "And Adrien, will he be family soon too?"

If I survive that long, I think. "I hope so." Things are about to get tough and scary, but for now I enjoy the comfort of tea, cookies and the grandma who helped me discover my love of sewing, for without her I wouldn't be where I am today.

Day 16-Sleepover

Chapter Summary

Marinette has a girly sleepover with her friends, and they all hang out with Adrien in the morning. However, Marinette's mind is preoccupied having thoughts about The Supreme.

“How much nail polish and chocolate did you bring?” Rebelle asks as Celeste blushes. The girl’s have arrived for the sleepover, and it seems Celeste has a sweet tooth for chocolate.

“Hey, between the three of us, we’ll do plenty of damage, and after spring break the hard work begins.” I flop down on my own sleeping bag. “Tell me about it. I’ve been practicing my report in front of the mirror, but not to anyone yet.”

“You mean Adrien hasn’t heard it?” Rebelle asks, and I blush. “I went over to his place the other day. He was being such a pill, I started a water fight.” “Atta girl! Did you win?” I hide my face, peeking through my fingers. “No, I stepped into the shower area, and he turned on the shower. How is he so sneaky?”

Celeste shrugs. “Hey, guys are like that. They look all cute and sweet, and bam! They’re either flirting, kissing, or teasing.” “Adrien is all those things, but he’s the sweetest boy I’ve ever met. Can you believe we spent half our lives on different continents?” “You were waiting for Mr. Right to come along, and as far as I can tell, the wait was worth it for you.” Rebelle smiles at me.

I try to smile, but it falters. What if the Supreme gets what he wants, kills me, and Adrien will be left all alone? Or worse, what if he dies trying to protect me? All over a stupid brooch too. I know it has magical powers, but is power that more desirable then love? He’s always going to want more and more power, never to be satisfied.

“Where did you go, Marinette?” Celeste asks. “Yeah, you were miles away,” Rebelle chimes in. “Adrien and I are just working through some things, that’s all.” I hope that answer works, and I hold up my hands. “Don’t worry, we’re not fighting, it’s just complicated.” Celeste takes my hand. “If you ever need us, Marinette. We’re here.” I squeeze her hand. “Don’t worry, you’ll both be in my wedding!”

Of course, that causes massive squeals, and I'm peppered with the question as has Adrien proposed to me yet. I don't want him to propose until the Supreme has been dealt with, I think to myself. The end results are to painful otherwise.

"Who's ready for nail polish action?" I paste a smile on my face. And I do enjoy the sleepover, buoyed up with giggles and chocolate with my two best friends in the world.

I'm first to wake in the morning, and the girls are still fast asleep. A soft ding has me reaching for my phone, finding a good morning text from Adrien.

Adrien: How's my sleeping beauty this morning?
Marinette: You know, Sleeping Beauty's "nap" lasted for a hundred years.
Adrien: Only because she pricked her finger on a spinning wheel and as far as I know, you don't have one.
Marinette: You should talk, Agreste. As a fluffy feline, are you grooming in front of the mirror?
Adrien: Ha, ha. Are you and the girls up for coffee?
Marinette: I'll get back to you. Up for training this afternoon?
Adrien: Only if I can kiss you after.
Marinette: Aw, your such a romantic.
Adrien: Don't get sappy on me.
Marinette: Don't you mean hissy?

He sends me a back a winky face, and I set down the phone as the girls are stirring. Celeste groans. "I had a nightmare I had to wear a chocolate dress to the prom." Rebelle grins, tossing a pillow at her. "I told you that was a lot of chocolate. Marinette, was that Romeo?"

"Romeo was wondering if we want to join him for coffee," I ask. "I'm game. But only after we doll you up a bit, Marinette."

I feel like a artist as we step out into the early morning sunshine in my overalls and beret. Perhaps I should carry a paintbrush in case inspiration hits me. My pace is quick as I'm eager to see Adrien, and the girls have to walk fast to keep up with me. "Ooh, someone's eager to kiss their man," Rebelle teases. I'm just about to respond when out of the corner of my eye I see a shadow. Quickly, I link arms with the girls. "Let's go." Celeste catches her breath. "Is someone following us, Marinette?" I don't answer, for I know who follows us and the sooner we get into a more public spot the better. I don't know how Adrien knew I needed help, for Claw Noir steps into the alley.

“If your going to hurt one of my girls, your going to have to fight me first,” he says, blocking the Supreme’s entrance. I hustle the girls behind some boxes, ignoring their protests when I go to help Claw. Ducking into a dark corner, I transform and hurry to my partner’s side.

“You are slow to retrieve I want, and I’m starting to wonder if I gave the Miraculous to the wrong holders. And I don’t like to be kept waiting.” “The girls have nothing to do with our mission. We planned on asking you for more training this afternoon.”

It’s a rarity that the Supreme looks surprised, but he does now. “Your up to something,” he points a accusatory finger at me, sharp and foreboding as a claw. “Don’t toy with me, Toxinelle. I’ll see you later.”

I didn’t realize I was holding my breath until Claw told me to release it. “Go detransform. I’ll take care of the girls.”

Of course my friends we’re scared that something happened to me, but I assure them I was safely hiding close by. I hate lying to them, but it’s for the best.

“And how is my Princess today?” Adrien whispers as we hug inside the coffee shop, as if nothing happened. I hug him tightly, not knowing just how much I missed him. “I’m in a plotting and planning mood.” He raises his eyebrows at me. “Oh?” “Tell you later.”

I do enjoy our coffee date, but I’m distracted. However, I tell the girls what a lovely time I had. After they leave, I grab Adrien’s hand. “Come on, we need to talk.” “Notre Dame roof? Or the little room?” he whispers. “The little room. Who knows how many shadows the Supreme has listening.”

Once there, I begin to pace the small room. “The Supreme has us under the impression that he holds the ultimate power in his hands, right?” Claw nods. “So, if we somehow took away those powers, he’d be weakened. And I know for a fact he has more then our Miraculous he’s given out. Plus, there must be some book on how to use them….” “Love, it’s good plan, but way to risky. You could be hurt, and we don’t know what hidden powers he could have.” I don’t usually feel frustration towards my boyfriend, but I do now. “Gabriel has yet to come up with a anti-dote and we sit back and do nothing, eventually the Supreme will kill us both. We have to take risks, Claw.”

He walks over to me, taking my hands in his. “I know. I’m just so afraid of losing you.” “If we don’t try, sooner or later one of us will be lost regardless.” “And how to plan on “breaking

in?" I begin to pace the small room. "I slip in under the cover of darkness, I…" I'm cut off as my compact beeps.

I slide it open, reading a message, my smile growing wider with every word. "With that smile, I assume you've just consumed one very tasty canary." "After training, the Supreme has invited us to a tea party, and I think he's going to get very sleepy after." "Sleeping potion?" I shrug. "Close enough. My father at times has a hard time sleeping but these pills can knock him out. And I don't think he'll miss a few."

"And here you thought I was the wicked one." I tilt my head. "And who do you think I learned it from?" His breathtaking kiss is my answer, and I weave my hands through his hair, as his gloved hands find my waist.

We're taking a big risk here, but somehow I think it's going to work. Taking off, I resume a "normal day" at my grandparents and when the afternoon comes I take a short detour to my parents house.

It's sort of bittersweet that we've grown apart while I've been at school, but I don't want the Supreme going after my loved ones, especially them.

I meet Adrien at the stroke of four in front of the Supreme's house. Rap! Rap! Rap! My vial of powder is hidden in a secret pocket, and Adrien slides his arms around my waist. "Should I tell him it's his UN-birthday like in Alice in Wonderland?" he finds my cheek for a kiss. "Don't you dare. He'd probably send us to Wonderland instead."

The Supreme opens the door like this morning never happened. "Ah, your here. Change into your suits and let's get started."

Apparently, he's taking us seriously because he shows us a map of Ariel Paris, showing us the best way to traverse the city. "At Notre Dame, you'll find your target practices up on the roof. Once your training is complete, we'll proceed with the party. Off you go!"

Adrien is already transformed, racing for the doors. "Last one to the top of Notre Dame is a rotten egg, Cockroach!"

I take off after him, not feeling the elated joy that he's feeling. Instead, a cold feeling is settling in my tummy. The Supreme seemed much to happy to have us out in wild Paris.

To my surprise, I beat Claw to the top. "Looks like you're the rotten egg!" I hold my fist out for a bump, when I notice Claw has frozen. "Cockroach, do you see what I see?" A snarling

sound, followed by a rumble beneath our feet alerts me. Then a carnivorous giant piranha plant appears. Do piranha plants eat ladybugs or cockroaches? We're about to find out.

Day 17-Tea Party

Chapter Summary

Toxinelle and Claw are invited to a tea party at the Supreme's after training, if they make back alive.

“Claw? Are you seeing what I’m seeing?” I point a shaky finger at the plant, the side of its mouth white with foam. I bet a Asian beetle or Ladybug would be a tasty snack. “I see it, but I don’t want to meet it. And the only piranha plant I know is from Super Mario.”

If we weren’t being stared down by a giant carnivorous plant, I might have laughed or rolled my eyes, because that sounds right up Adrien’s alley.

I shut my eyes, thinking about to my mother’s garden in China. Besides the bakery, it was her pride and joy. However, every year her scowl would grow more permanent during aphid season, for a lot of the food we grew was food for our family. An idea strikes me. “Cockroach, are you in some sort of trance? Snap out of it!” Claw says, taking his baton and shaking it at the plant. “Claw, can you keep it occupied for a few minutes? I need to run a errand?” Claw’s mouth falls open, agape. “M’lady, this really is no time to be thinking of coffee, and I’ll be occupied soon inside its belly!”

“Trust me on this. Love ya!” I swing away, hoping Claw won’t hate me for temporarily abandoning him, and I dash down the sidewalk looking for a flower shop. A young girl is watering the plants outside when I come skittering around the corner like a giant water beetle, and she stares at me in worry. “Miss? You, okay?” I can see her concern as I’m bent over, trying to catch my breath. “I need aphids,” I look up at her, hoping she has some in stock. She gulps visibly. “You sure? They’ll eat anything you know.” “Look,” I open my palms, almost pleading. “If you have aphids, I’d be glad to take them off your hands, no charge.”

“Walk through the store, first cage on the left. Help yourself.” “Thanks!” I dash inside, breathing in the perfumed air. “Lucky Charm!” I call up my magical object, almost giggling with glee as a glass jar drops into my hands complete with screw top lid.

The cage is alive with green crawlie things, and even I feel a little sick as I open the lid, scooping my jar into the throng. When my jar is full, I clamp on the top and shut the lid, heading out the back door, back to Notre Dame.

Claw and the plant are in some kind of dance, and I gently push him behind me, hiding my jar. “Hey, piranha! Do you like ladybugs? Come and get me!” “M’lady, no!” Claw tugs on my arm. Turning, I give him a swift kiss that hopefully will leave him breathless as rapid-fire talk. “Just trust me! I have a plan!”

Snap! I’m consumed whole and I can hear Claw’s yowls of rage. Hopefully he doesn’t think to do a scratch attack, or my partner could be joining me. I squat down, opening my jar. “Okay, you little aphids hungry?”

I don’t know what’s worse: The smell inside the plant, or the aphids crawling all over me. The plant gives a roar, and I smile a sinister smile of victory. The Supreme probably knew this plant wouldn’t be able to resist a tasty ladybug, but he failed to know that this little beetle’s not going down without a fight. Eventually, the plant withers away and I’m able to hack away, crawling out, wet, but unhurt.

“Toxinelle!” Claw rushes forward, scooping me up in a tight hug. “Let me know your plan before you get eaten next time,” he scolds me. “Um, love?” “Yeah?” “I’m covered in plant digestives.” A more anguished yowl emerges. “I need a bath, I stink. Then we have that party.”

Heading back to school, I slip back into the dorms, promising Claw I’ll meet him back here in about fifteen minutes. Besides, the Supreme can assume I’m still in the belly of the plant for a few more minutes.

The shower is heavenly, and a full-on smile blooms on my face as I scrub my hair with lilac and lavender. When I see Adrien, I skip across the grass into his face. “Feeling better, Bluebell?” he whispers as he holds me close. I’m about to respond when I catch a whiff of his scent, and I gaze up at him. “Is that mango?” When Adrien gets embarrassed, he wears the cutest shade of pink. “Mango and Coconut, part of the Tropical Dream collection.” “It’s heavenly,” I take a big whiff. “And your heavenly, ha, ha,” I giggle, poking him lightly in the chest. “Adrien?” “Hm?” “Could we make hot cocoa later? I’m going to need to distract myself from the piranha.” He finds my hand, giving it a squeeze. “Of course, love.”

It’s almost like I imagine that the Supreme looks disappointed when I return. The food and tea is good, but it also tastes like ashes in my mouth. I nearly choke on a scone when he turns his piercing eyes on me.

“Why are you stalling at getting me the Butterfly Miraculous? Or do you know the Butterfly holder, Toxinelle? Beneath the mask, hm? And could he be the father of the boy you love?”

I’m silent a good long while before answering. “It’s true, I did fall in love with a boy,” I set down my teacup. “But I know what real love is. What your asking Claw and me to do, you’ll only want more and more power. With the boy I’m in love with,” I sigh, happily. “My heart is full and satiated.”

“Wouldn’t you want to find a girl who can do the same for you?” Claw asks, in a soft, cajoling tone. “To be your forever friend, one who can cook meals, share your hopes and dreams….”

The Supreme scoffs at us. “Love is just a illusion of reality. With power, you have the upper hand.” “Your wrong,” I feel brave and powerful, but it’s a different kind of power then the Supreme feels. The power of using my voice and being brave.

The Supreme strokes his beard. “And what if, for instance, you lost your love, Toxinelle? Or suddenly you vanished?”

Coldness begins to seep into my thoughts. I sit, numb and frozen, unwilling to answer. “Bugaboo is tired from her training,” Claw smiles, helping me up. “We’ll see you soon.”

As the heroes left, the Supreme walked into his room of rare and beautiful crafted artistic vases he had collected over in China.

“She thinks she’s such a clever ladybug! And she has always had her confidante by her side, mask or no mask! Well, what would she do faced with a adversity like no other, cut off from the boy she loves?”

The Supreme hurled a vase into the wall, the shards raining down musically shattering. The Supreme clicked his fingers. “That’s it. I’ll use my powers to send her to a other timeline, back when Paris was flooded and abandoned.”

He threw one more vase for good measure. It was clear this Ladybug wouldn’t be taking the Brooch and handing it over willingly. If he got rid of her, he could go straight to the source. After all, he had known where the brooch had been hiding all this time.

Why hadn't he thought of this idea sooner? And with Claw thinking Toxinelle gone forever, would he be so devastated in grief he would do anything to get her back? Oh, this plan was marvelously wicked, and he couldn't wait to put it into place.

"I have Mario Kart," I tell Adrien as we head up the sidewalk to my grandparents' home. "Want to race?" Adrien holds the gate open for me. "Sure, but something tells me, you'll get huffy losing." A note catches my eye as I look for my key. Looks like they'll be out for a while. "I get hissy, not huffy," my cheeks are burning as I unlock the door.

"Or" Adrien's voice is soft and low as I close the door behind us. "I could offer you a friendly wager." I go into pout mode. "All I want is a little kiss," I fold my arms and look away. "Oh? A little kiss, is that all?" Okay, no more nice Bugaboo. "Are you going to kiss me or not?" Adrien laughs, cornering me. "Oh, so impatient." "I don't have nine lives." His lips are mere inches from mine. "But I do."

I wear the name Lady Luck, but even without my suit, I feel like the luckiest girl alive when Adrien kisses me. After our kiss, we just stand there hugging for a while, him stroking my hair. I have a feeling me being swallowed right in front of him maybe will haunt me more than me.

"Come on," I take his hand, leading him into the living room. "I want to throw some bananas at you."

The atmosphere tonight is peaceful, and we flirt and bicker, and flirt some more. Grandma texts that she'll be back late, and Adrien offers to stay with me until 9, as they should be home by then.

I feel myself growing sleepy, and Adrien smiles quitting the game. Then, to my surprise, he pulls me close, and we cuddle on the couch, me with my head against his chest. With a blanket wrapped around both of us, it seems like no evil can touch us. I end up falling asleep for a short time.

"Don't worry, it was only a little drool and just a midge of snoring," Adrien's eyes are bright. "I do not snore!" "Uh-uh. Say, what's for dinner?" "Cat food." Adrien pouts. "Hey, not nice. Besides, cat food is awful!" "Are you speaking from experience?" I laugh. "Pizza's good, with sodas."

I sigh happily. The food is soon ordered and Adrien's going to help me set the table. Is pizza a romantic food or what? No, but then again, I have yet to eat pizza with Adrien Agreste.

Day 18-Flower Garden

Chapter Summary

Adrien and Marinette are paired up to make a floral fashion creation, and Marinette finds herself in the world of flowers, literally!

I look at myself critically in the mirror. My friends and I have our first Topiary class this morning, and I chose a rather flowery outfit, complete with (fake) sunflowers in my buns. Will the bees know I'm not a giant flower and rather a human girl?

Bam! Bam! Bam! "Marinette, stop dreaming, we need to eat and get to class!" Rebelle calls through the door. I sigh, flower Marinette it is, and I grab my backpack. Truth be told, I'm really excited about today's class for though I've heard about fashion and flowers, colliding the two worlds seems rather bold and daring.

Adrien is already eating as we join him at our usual table. "So, Adrien, do you think Marinette is trying for extra credit dressed as a flower, or do you think she was doing it for you?" Adrien nearly chokes on his bowl of oatmeal. "Um, you look pretty, but then you look pretty all the time."

"Hey, what's wrong with flowers?" I toss out the question casually, then cringe. As much as I try to block the memory, I let myself be swallowed by one. Adrien takes out his phone, tapping it, a subtle sign he wants to chat.

Adrien: M'lady, don't bee sore I won the game last night. Besides, if a giant swarm comes after you, your own your own.

I peek up at him, and he grins evilly. Okay, Agreste.

Marinette: I wasn't sore, I was more into the cuddles and kisses, and what about your nine lives and being a knight in shining leather?
Adrien: M'lady, you seem to be able to handle anything. I bow to that much wisdom.

Looks like I'm on my own, but it's a class on flowers, not beekeeping. Adrien and I are paired up, and my friends cannot stop giggling as they scamper away.

“Okay, I can work with this,” I walk around a wire dress frame, sketchpad in hand. “What are you thinking?” Adrien asks, as we sit together, and my hand flies over the paper, trying to get my vision out of my head.

“It’s a otherworldly fairy tale, and the fairy emerges from the lake, dripping with green moss. The villagers abhor her, but as they watch the moss falls away leaving a waterlily dress instead, her skin glowing as luminous as a pearl. She catches the attention of a young man, not knowing by the end of their night of dancing, they will be lovers that last forever.” Adrien shifts around, and I wonder what he’s thinking. Oh, no. Adrien maybe a romantic towards me, but maybe he thinks it’s too much sap?

“One question,” he finds the soft patch of the skin on my neck to kiss, lowering his voice. “You're not going to turn into a waterlily on me, are you?” “I will always be your ladybug, but for this project, yes, I will become a flower.”

“Come on, let’s start picking. Let me change into my shorts, so I can grab a lily or two.” “Okay.” Adrien’s voice is softer now, not teasing and happy as it was just a second ago.

Leaving him to his thoughts, I change into my swim shorts and look at Tikki, who is now flying around in the changing stall.

“Did I open my mouth and say something I shouldn’t?” I sit on the little bench. Tikki fumbles with her little hands, sighing. Uh-oh, she only does that when she’s uncomfortable and now I am.

“Marinette, you do realize what the lily can represent right?” I think hard for a moment, then gasp feeling tears in my eyes. “It’s a flower of death, and if I can’t save Emile….” the tears are flowing now. Was Hesperia, Gabriel? Just bluffing to make us feel better, give us both false hope?

“I need to change the design,” I tell Tikki, then fling open the door. But Adrien is nowhere to be seen. “Marinette?” My teacher walks over to me, and I steel myself. “Adrien wasn’t feeling well, so I set him to lie down. My, your looking pale too, dear. Do I need to excuse you?”

I’m about to just suggest moving me into Celeste’s and Rebelle’s group, when I get a idea. A risky idea, but I need to start taking action.

“I want to work on the sketch anyway, and I can do that as I rest,” I hate the lies coming out of my mouth.

But I don’t go to my room, instead transform, and head towards the Agreste mansion. Desperation sends me into a panic mode, and I whirl my yo-yo at the camera. “I demand to see Gabriel Agreste!”

The voice on the other side of the intercom appears bored. “And what is this urgency?” My voice slips into a plea. “Please, it’s about his wife…”

the doors spring open and I walk in, ushered straight into Gabriel's office. "Shouldn't you be at school?" he asks, once he's gotten over the surprise at seeing me. I ignore the question. "Why have you been sitting idly by when we need to find the cure for Emile? Are you that scared of finding the cure? Or" my voice breaks off, and to tell you the truth, I don't really feel like me right now. "Was Adrien right that only making dresses and costumes has taken over your life!"

I want to hurl my yo-yo into the dresses, handbags and shoes all on mannequins around the office. "Light wings, rise." I watch through hot tears as Gabriel transforms into Hesperia. "Marinette, we're doing the best we can."

"Adrien's not doing well. I can't explain it, I just need to do something, instead of sitting around doing nothing." "I know you're not going to like this answer but sometimes doing nothing is doing all we can."

The fight mood drains away. "Blots Off." "Would you like some tea, before heading back to school?" I feel drained, exhausted now. "I'd love a cup."

"You know, Marinette, you're the best thing that's happened to Adrien since he started school. Why, I wouldn't be surprised if proposed to you before graduation."

I wrap my hands around my warm cup. "There won't be a wedding or graduation if Adrien and I don't take down the Supreme."

"Your right, Marinette. He has many Miraculous he could use for his evil bidding, but it looks like he's holding back for now. However, you and Adrien must always be vigilant."

"How much power does he have? Will we ever be able to defeat him?" Hesperia puts his hand on my shoulder. "You two have something very rare and special that the Supreme will never have. Your love and bond as soulmates."

As I head back to school, Adrien calls. "Hey, I've looked everywhere for you. You, okay?" "Yeah. Adrien, I'm sorry, I should have never come up with the lily design. I can't believe I was that insensitive after Tikki explained to me what that flower symbol meant." Adrien's face grows soft. "Your right, it did make me think of Mother, but she'd be so proud of you when you'd wear the dress, Marinette."

I stop in a abandoned alley. "So, you're not mad?" "No." I bow my head, shedding a few tears. "Love, what is it?" "I was...was about to take the Butterfly brooch. I don't know what came over me."

“When you get back, we can talk or if you want me to hold you, I will.” I wipe my eyes. “Okay. I love you, Adrien.” “Love you too. If if you are a Cockroach.” I sniffle. “Silly kitty.”

When I start to exit the alleyway, I sense I could be followed by the Supreme, but there’s no sign of anyone.

Just then, a shimmering light appears, the most beautiful orb I’ve ever seen. It’s beckoning to me, to step into its embrace. “No, Marinette!” Tikki cries, flying out of my purse and trying to stop me. “What if it’s a trap?”

“I want to feel happy again. And maybe if I escape this world for a few hours, I’ll be me again.” One foot. Then the other. The shimmer disappears and I find myself in a lush garden, and I hear birds chirping in the distance. “What is this place?”

“You are home, where all ladybugs come from. You're in The Garden.” A voice says. “Who’s there?” should I transform? What if it’s a enemy? A woman descends from somewhere up in the flowers, her face sharp and pointed and her longs arms reach towards me. “I am Tranuala, but you may call me Dordus,” she smiles. I gulp, taking a step back. “That’s a kind of spider, and spiders eat Ladybugs.”

She laughs; her laugh is like a wind chime. “Have you ever swung on spider-silk?” I shake my head. “I may be a ladybug, but I’m also human.” “Well, here you can swing on spider silk. Here, give me your hand...?” “Marinette.”

The ground is disappearing as we ascend up into the flowers, but I don’t feel afraid. “Here, give me one moment.”

A small swing is being created, and my new friend smiles at me. “Well, why not try it?” I touch the swing lightly. “Is it made of silk?” “Oh, trust me. It’s stronger then it looks.”

Carefully, I step into the swing and begin to pump my legs back and forth. The breeze I create is like feathers tickling my cheeks, the warm sunlight a old friend that I’ve missed. My confidence begins to soar as I swing higher and higher, laughing as I jump. “Tikki, Blots On!” I can fly here, and I relish the new feeling.

Dordus climbs her silk. “Would you like to see more the garden?” I laugh happily. “Yes! Do the flowers talk?” “They do, and their all anxious to meet you.”

My iridescent wings catch the sunlight one last time before I land, folding them neatly behind me. “Lead on.”

A sharp pang fills my heart, as I wonder where my Kitty is, but the feeling vanishes as we enter the sliver mist.

Day 19-Wish

Chapter Summary

> What ladybug wouldn't like to live in the land of flowers, or that's what the Supreme makes Marinette think as she discovers this world.

As much as I want to explore this new world, with the sun beating down on me, I begin to feel parched and thirsty. “If there’s a pool or stream, I would be most grateful,” I tell Dordus, licking my lips. My new friend scoffs at me. “Please, a ladybug should be drinking nectar. Come, it’s rather fun!”

We find a patch of bluebells, and I think of the one of many nicknames Adrien has for me. Up on the top of the flower, Dordus hands me a straw, gesturing to the yellow part of the flower.

I carefully make my way to the center, the floral scent getting stronger and stronger. I sit down carefully, poking my straw into the plant, sucking up nectar. Honey and suckle! Why have not drank nectar before? I drink deeply, the more I have, the more rejuvenated I feel. Dordus comes and sits by me, a smile on her sharp features. “Hits the spot, doesn’t it?”

Wow. I nod, as the sugar sweet liquid courses through my veins, like the healthiest sugar rush ever. “How did I get here anyway?” I ask, as she hands me a bottle of water. “You wished for it,” she says simply, shrugging her shoulders as if I asked for a stinky green bog. I try to think back before I enter here.

“No,” I shake my head. “I was heading back to school, and I saw a beautiful shimmering light.” Again, my throat tightens thinking of Adrien. “What is this Paris you speak of?” she asks. “I attend the Paris School of Art and Design. I’m studying to be fashion designer.”

“Who needs school when you have plenty of designs and fashions right here in the garden? Are you sure you're feeling all right, Marinette?” Why doesn’t she believe me? And I know I didn’t wish for us, as beautiful as it is. I just want to be back in Adrien’s arms, flirting and being playful: translation: us being normal.

“We’ve spent so much time in the sun, it’s best to get back in the shade.” I shrug my shoulders, I’ll find my way out of here eventually, Dordus or not.

Roar! I jump as a orange and black flower glares down at me, growling deep in it's...throat? Stem?

"Tiger!" Dordus snaps. "Can't you see? It's just a ladybug!" I gulp nervously, wiggling my fingers in a "hello" gesture. "Can she roar as loud as me?" He bends down, eyeing me with a glare. To my surprise, I laugh. "Ladybugs don't roar, silly! But we do bring good luck!"

Immediately, Tiger's expression changes. "Those changes everything! Say, do you think you could bring some luck to my friend here?" He gestures to a flower that the petals have not quite opened yet. "I'm hoping to make a good impression on her," Tiger continues, whipping out a small mirror, I snort. This flower would get along perfectly with Claw.

A trickle of a tear runs down my face, and before I can wipe it away, Tiger catches sight of it, hissing at me in surprise. "What is that water running out of your eyes?" "It's called crying. I miss my Kitty; you remind me a lot like him."

Tiger's expression softens and he opens his leaves. "There, there. It will be okay, Marinette." I walk into the leaves, my first plant hug. An unexpected sound rumbles from the plant, only it's very familiar to my ears. "Are you purring?" I laugh, the last of my tears falling into the soil. Before Tiger can answer, the ground begins to rumble beneath our feet.

Dordus scurries up a sleeping violet, leaping into a nearby tree as the flower wakes and glares, shaking her off.

Before I know what's happening, the other tiger lily blooms. She looks around, cowering in fright, and I know how she's feeling, and I speak up. "I know the world can be a scary place, but Tiger here, he'll take care of you." Tiger lets out a low, rumbling purr, nuzzling the flower. "Your tears were tears of love, Marinette. And it helped her to open."

I will miss Tiger and the other flower, but Dordus says it's time to go. I feel like I'm in Alice in Wonderland, and I stop by a small well.

"It's a wishing well," Dordus explains. "Toss in a penny and you'll be granted one wish." "Just one?" my voice is soft. She narrows her eyes at me. "Yes. Why, what are your desires?" "To bring Emile back. But I want to be with Adrien," my face is conflicted, even upon the ripples of the water.

"Blots Off." I'm sure I have a coin in my purse, and I grasp my penny. "Though this wish wasn't my wish, it was lovely to meet you."

"You aren't staying, Marinette? The garden needs you." "I…" I turn to the surface of the water, seeing Adrien's reflection worried and scared as he scours Paris for me, transforming.

“I’m needed elsewhere, but maybe one day, we’ll meet again.” I toss my penny in, and with a brilliant flash, I’m back at school in my dorm. Back in Paris.

My phone is chiming with messages, all from Adrien.

Marinette: Meet me in our secret spot. X Marinette

It seems down here in the tunnels, the Supreme leaves us alone. “M’lady?” Adrien. I run towards him, laughing as he swoops me up. We aren’t in one of the boarded tunnels, just on the abandoned platform. “I was so worried,” his breath is sweet as honey. “The Supreme tricked me, thinking I’d rather be in garden like a real ladybug, instead of here with you.”

I feel my back bump gently against the wall. “I thought I had lost you.” “Nope. Same me, same Cockroach. Are-are you mad at me, for what happened in class?” “No. And by the way, we still have that assignment to do.” I groan, then let out a small giggle. “Then kiss me, for we have work to do.”

“But there’s a bee on it! I don’t want to get stung!” Claw holds his tail, as if it will protect him from the bee. “Oh, for goodness's sake. We’re working with flowers, what did you expect?” “You work on the flowers. I’ll work on the moss.”

We work in companionable silence for a few minutes. “Love?” “Hm?” “If the Supreme can send me to other worlds, can he trap me there?” “With any other girl I’d say yes. But you're too clever, M’lady.” He walks over for a soft peck on the cheek.

“You don’t understand. When I walk into the brightness, it’s like I was under its control, and I wanted to go. Until I remembered you. I had to make a decision to come back, or…” Claw looks up at me when I don’t respond.

“Or…” he prompts. “Bring your mother back.” He comes over, resting his hands on my shoulders. “It’s like Hesperia said, Bugaboo. Patience might be the key to victory.”

Faintly, I hear the dinner bell sound. “Come on, we can work more one this tomorrow. Let’s put in the shed.”

It's cozy and warm in the shed, and a short shower surprises us. "What's with me, never having a umbrella!" "I'm fine with it," Claw blushes. "It seems I get to kiss you in the rain."

However passionate a kiss may be, I'd rather do it in a dry area, and we run, laughing towards school, but Claw deviates our route as thunder rumbles overhead. We dart into the cherry trees, Claw's hand firmly wrapped around mine. "Is this the safest place?" I yell, as the wind picks up. "We have no choice. We must stay…"

Suddenly, Claw grows rigid as his hand squeezes mine, then goes limp as he faints away. "Claw? Claw!"

I check him all over, finding a small dart hitting his side. I look up to see the Supreme watching me, then disappearing into the rain. My eyes blaze with fury, but I must keep a clear head until I can get my partner to safety. Carefully, I twist out the dart, transforming and dropping into my yo-yo.

I hurry back to the garden shed, knowing he'll be safe here. Now I can study the dart more carefully and with careful observations, it seems to be some kind of sleeping powder.

Again, I have no anti-dote, and I groan. But maybe somewhere at the Supreme's, there's a book of all the secrets I need to know. And then, I do something risky. Taking off my earrings, I set them aside to remove Claw's ring, leaving a sleeping Adrien. I slip my Miraculous into his hand, curling it into a fist.

"Keep Adrien safe, Tikki." I slip his ring onto my finger. To gain access to what I desire, I need the powers of destruction. "Plagg, Daggers Out."

With a soft swooshing sound, the black leather cocoons around my body, my hair now one long braid.

The garden shed is now darkened with the raging storm outside, and in a flash of lighting, I catch my reflection for a second, but it's enough.

"I am now Lady Noir," I whisper. I feel sleek and powerful, and as I head out into the storm, I hardly feel the lashing water at my face.

I'm intent on going to the Supreme's. It seems fitting that thunder booms, when he catches sight of me, as if he has been waiting.

“Claw Noir? No, that’s impossible!” I leap into the open windows, stalking towards him. “No, I’m Lady Noir. Tell me how to wake him up.” The Supreme laughs. “You won’t do a thing for me, so I why should I do anything for you?”

“So be it then. Cataclysm.” A swirling ball of destruction sits in my hands and I run from room to room, searching for the items at which I seek.

“Nothing’s here, Toxinelle,” I whirl around, hand raised, daring him to come closer. But I stumble and fall in the darkness, screaming as I plunge through the floor with the rubble pile growing in my wake.

Day 20-Lady Noir

Chapter Summary

Adrien gets hit with a sleeping dart, and Marinette must temporarily become Lady Noir, and find a cure to wake Adrien before it's too late.

I stay in a fetal position until the dust settles. I must be in some sort of secret hidden room, for books line the shelves above me, and a large box that looks like my sewing box at home, stands out. Could that be where the rest of the Miraculous are hiding?

I try to stand, but end up coughing hard, my lungs screaming for fresh air. But if I don't grab the Grimore, and the Miracle Box, this could be my last chance to save the ones I love. On wobbly legs, I stand again even though the space is cramped, and I head over to the shelf, hurling the books over my shoulders as I look for the book I seek.

The last one is thick and ancient looking, plus it has a Chinese symbol on the cover. Bright flashes of light flicker before my eyes. You can't give up now, I tell myself. Not when you're so close to answers!

A cracking sound comes from above me, and I look up startled. The Supreme. He knows I'm here under the rubble, possibly stealing most of the powers. But how do I get the Miracle Box and the Grimore away from here, especially in my current condition?

A blue portal opens, causing me to squeak in fright, clutching my precious objects to my chest. "Marinette, I'll get you to safety!" A kind man with a long gray beard beckons me to hurry. I have no choice but to trust him, and I follow him through the portal.

I could cry with happiness and relief as cold fresh air swirls down and I can breathe properly again. But the happiness is soon replaced by shivers as the snow howls around us. "Sorry about the weather," my rescuer apologizes. "Here in Tibet, it's the snowy season, I'm afraid." I'm in Tibet, back at the Temple?

"Come, we'll get you warm, dry and fed in no time," he says, taking a step towards the Temple. "Wait," I whisper. From our vantage point, the Temple resembles a large red and white frosted cake, with thousands of candles glowing as if welcoming their traveler's home. I snap a picture on baton, not knowing if it will turn out, but I tried. The scene is truly beautiful, and one I will never forget.

Two hours later, I'm warm and dry, pink cheeked from a hot shower, sipping chai tea and looking through the Grimore. It seems like the two anti-dotes I seek can be found here at the Temple, and I write the down the "recipes." Once the storm has passed over, someone will help me retrieve the items I need.

Meanwhile, I read about my powers and Claw's, plus the other Miraculous. Well, sort of. It's like a book on tape in Chinese, and because of my status I can learn this ancient but guarded secrets. Not just anyone can come to the Temple and read the books, but then again, not everyone has outsmarted the Supreme.

"It's only a first step, Marinette, but it's a important one," my rescuer, who I find named Taurus, sits down across from me. I sigh, turning another page in my book. "Your right. Just because I can make the anti-dotes, doesn't mean the Supreme won't try and stop me from using them."

I bite my lip, then take the plunge. "What happened to Emile Agreste? Why did the Supreme poison her?" I ask. It's not a answer my boyfriend would know, and it's just not a question I could ask Gabriel.

Taurus gives me a sad smile. "Gabriel already had the Butterfly Brooch, even before he and Emile tried convincing a child, as they we're newly married." Taurus's smile fades away as he continues. "But when they were ready, Emile couldn't become pregnant. How they longed for a child. The Supreme, or Wang Fu is his real name, already knew the Agreste's and offered them a solution they could hardly refuse.

Using the power of the Peacock Miraculous, Emile was finally able to convince a child. But Wang Fu had deliberately hidden from them that the Peacock Miraculous was damaged, causing Emile to become ill. Gabriel tried to manipulate Wang into telling him a way to fix it, but the Supreme was clever, and in his anger, poisoning Emile. Until now, no one knew the cure for it was hidden in the pages of your book."

I digest the new information slowly. "Gabriel was already a fashion designer when he married Emile. It makes sense he turned away from his son as he fell deeper and deeper into despair." "Yes, but that wasn't the right choice, Marinette. As you've witnessed things are now repairing themselves between Gabriel and Adrien, with a big thanks to you."

I shrug, not feeling like I didn't do anything I wouldn't for any friend. "Now, it seems the storm has calmed down and you need to begin potion making."

When I step back through the portal with my precious vials, Tikki gives a little chirp of joy. I cuddle close to my cheek, smiling at Adrien, curled up in a ball, snoring and asleep. "You did

it, Marinette. Just like I knew you would." "The hard work has only just begun, Tikki." I fill just the right amount of the potion, poking it gently into Adrien's arm. As I wait for it to take a effect, I hold my breath.

It isn't long before he begins to stir, and he sits up, rubbing his head. "Princess?" his sleepy eyes try to focus on me. "Sh, rest. Yes, I am your Princess, but for a short time I became Lady Noir. However, my love, I think this ring belongs to you." He smiles as put the ring back on his finger.

"Adrien, I have the antidote! We can wake up your mother!" His mouth drops open. "How?" "I went to the Supreme and when he threatened me I used the Cataclysm, sending me into a secret room. A Guardian came and helped me find the right potions."

"Marinette," Adrien takes his hands in mine. "I think we should wait." Do I still have dust in my ears? "Adrien, the clock will stop for her any time now-" He presses his finger to my lips. "I know, but the Supreme will strike when we least expect it. For now, let's lay low." I groan, and he pulls me to his chest where I can bury my face in his shirt.

"I hate it when your right," I peek up at him and glare. He chuckles. "Well then, it's a good thing I'm not often right." "I didn't say that."

"You know, it's cherry blossom season at the Temple, and we still have the design to do. Maybe…" "I'm in." Taurus had invited me back when he found I loved flowers, and I pull out of the small boxes containing one the Miraculous.

A bright light shimmers as I open the box, temporarily blinded us. When we open our eyes, a small floating horse is staring back at us. "Hello, my name is Khaalii and I'm your Kwami." "Pleased to meet you. I'm Marinette and this is Adrien. Or you can call us Toxinelle and Claw Noir."

"You're the girl who rescued us from our cruel master! Oh, thank you!" Our Kwami wants to sing our praises, but I don't want to meet the Supreme any time soon. "Thank us later. Let's go."

"Why, Marinette, you've returned! And you've awoken Adrien." "Okay, maybe I am Sleeping Beauty." Adrien laughs.

"Come, I'll take you to the cherry blossom trees." We head outdoors and even from the battlements; my mouth drops open as a sea of pink blossoms lays below me. "Wow," I whisper. "I have one request, Marinette," Taurus smiles, handing us pails. "In exchange for cherry blossoms, would you pick us two baskets of cherries? I know the cooks could whip up

something delicious in the kitchen." Before I can respond, Adrien pipes up. "Say no more. I love cherries."

Transforming, swing into one of the nearest trees, laughing when a shower of petals rains down on Claw's hair. He grins, and I scoot close for a kiss, his warm hand on my cheek. He pulls me close, and hidden in the trees, we just cuddle for a while.

"Now, remember," I wag a finger under his nose. "Whoever fills their pail first, buys the other Starbucks for a week. Not a eating contest."

Even with our gloved hands, they get stained with cherry juice and we stay out until nearly dark. We have Taurus count them, so we don't cheat. "I don't think you'll like this, but it's a tie!"

I burst into laughter at Adrien's expression. "Looks like we're buying each other drinks!" Adrien grins.

Later that night, alone in my room with Tikki, I walk over to the window seat. The beautiful candles are once again aglow, and makes me wonder, would this be a good place to settle down in these mountains?

Out here there's nothing about mountains, trees, and sky that goes on forever. Maybe we can explore some caves while we're here.

Yet, as safe and peaceful as this place is, we'll face to go back to Paris eventually. The Supreme must be livid at me, and I know he won't trust me or Adrien again. The Supreme is now our enemy.

Crawling into bed, I draw for awhile to calm myself down, just as I would do at my dorm room back home. My phone dings:

Adrien: Sweet dreams, Princess. I'm heading to the Land of Slumber.
Marinette: Snoring is such sweet sorrow.
Adrien: Huh?
Marinette: Oh, come on, you know how loud you are.
Adrien: Just wait till we're married.

My breath catches in my throat.

Setting my phone aside, I switch off the light, dreaming when we are married, having a family, dreaming when peace is restored. For now, it's just a dream, but I'm determined to make it a reality.

Day 21-Cherry Blossoms

Chapter Summary

> Marinette and Adrien take a brief respite of fun, but the Supreme is about send them to a place that Marinette thought she would never return.

I can't sleep. And however much I toss and turn, or plump my pillow, isn't going to change it. Maybe a cup of cocoa will help me sleep, after all, it's worked before. Slipping into my slippers, I quietly exit the room.

It's quiet this time of night, but a few monks wander the halls, other snoozing in armchairs by the fire grates. No one tries to stop me to go back to bed. I pass a small, dark room full of candles and a figure is kneeling on the floor, their back turned to me. Curious, I peek around the doorjamb, finding its Claw.

I slip in quietly, closing the door behind me. "Hey," I call softly, and Claw turns and smiles at me. "You couldn't sleep either, Princess?" I kneel down beside him. "Did for a while," I admit, "but my mind won't shut off." "Me too. One of the monks told me about this room, and how I could light a candle for my mother." "I hope we can wake her up, Adrien. I feel selfish keeping the vial hidden when she could already be cured." Claw sighs. "I've been thinking a lot about that, you know," he says softly. "You know I wouldn't be mad at you if she didn't wake up. None of this is your fault, anyway."

I just stare at him. "I accepted her fate a long time ago, after all. And, if I'm right, she did too. She gave me the two greatest gifts on earth: life and love."

My voice shakes as I answer. "those are very fragile things." "That's why you protect them with your life, your love, your being. Marinette, can I ask you something?" I smile nervously, even if there's nothing to smile about. "This sounds like a loaded question." "Did you think I'd be mad at you if you didn't repair everything?" I shrug my shoulders. "No, not mad," I want to be honest with my answers. "Hurt and disappointed, and I didn't want to give you false hope."

His face is beautiful, glowing in the candlelight. "You really wouldn't be mad?" "No."

It feels scary when I just start crying, but maybe my emotions were being bottled up until they could be contained no longer. "Everything is so messed up and sideways, Adrien. And I feel like when we take two steps forward, we take four steps back."

“Hey, hey,” he pulls me close, comforting me. “We have each other and that’s enough.” He rubs my back and whispers sweet nothings until I calm down. “If you didn’t find me, where were you headed?” “To find cocoa.” He stands up, bowing that little bow I love so much. “Would my Lady like some company?” “Love some.”

Sleepy after a warm drink and kisses, I can at last sleep in the gray hours of dawn, promising Adrien, I’ll meet him at sunrise.

I find him dressed for the elements and Taurus waits by his side. “I heard you want to check out some of the caves around here, Marinette. I was giving Adrien a map, and the picnic lunch should be ready shortly.”

Adrien holds out another gray robe. “This one’s yours, love. Go change and we’ll leave when you get back.”

“How do I look?” I do a simple twirl for Adrien when I emerge. “Beautiful as always.”

The fresh air gives me hope as we set out along the path, and I wonder if we will find our potential future home today. “So, why did you want to explore out here anyway?” Adrien asks, curious. “Could you see us living in the mountains?” I ask. Adrien smiles, his eyes twinkling. “What about your Starbucks?” I shrug. “I’d find a way,” and Adrien laughs. “We’d fish, and garden, grow our own food. Be free up here.”

Both of us are lost in our thoughts for a while. Maybe that’s what we long for the most, freedom. Until the Supreme’s reign ends, we will always be under his thumb. Sure, we can escape and hide, but he will find us, if his shadows don’t find us first.

“Marinette, look,” Adrien nudges me. My eyes widen. “Cherry trees.” The path is lined with trees that looks like it could go on forever, as it ascends upwards into the mountains. Each tree is exploding in blossoms, and a sweet scent caresses the air. The branches sway and bend in the wind, and I get a idea.

“Catch me if you can! Blots On!” Transforming, I dash down the path, whirling my yo-yo and disappearing into the trees. Laughing with delight, I hear Claw mutter something like, “No fair!”

The scent of cherries is even stronger now, the sky a perfect blue as my partner and I swing through the trees, laughing and being happy.

Finally, I zip into a tree to catch my breath, Claw just a whisker behind me. “You're really slow!” I giggle, poking him. Claw grins. “Yeah, but I know how to get you back.” I cock my head, curious. “How?” Claw curls his claws reaching for me. “No!” I shriek. “Not the claws! Not the tickles!”

Here in the forest my worries are seeming to drop away, until I feel myself slipping, and we fall out of the tree. Bump! A rain of cherries falls on us, but Claw stops me from hitting the ground. “Thanks,” I whisper, my heart thudding.

Oh. My hand placement is on his chest, and his lips are soft and pink, and I want to kiss him…. “Toxinelle,” he whispers, settling me into a comfortable position.

“You are so beautiful,” he whispers, loosening the buns of my hair, letting it cascade down my back like a waterfall. “You should be a model; you’d love it even more than me.” I shake my head, cuddling into his chest. “No, I don’t like the limelight. I just want to have a family with you.”

When revelation hits, I stare up at my boyfriend in shock. What am I saying?! I’m always wanted to be a designer, it’s what I came to Paris for! Claw rests his hand on my soft cheek, trying to calm me. “You can have both. But you read my mind, Bugaboo. I want to be a father and take care of you.”

He helps me to my feet. We’re actually not that far from a small cave, and it’s quite cozy. Adrien disappears for a while, coming back with firewood at first, then leaves I can’t figure out what he’s up too.

But when we have fresh brewed tea over the fire, it seems like the most natural thing in the world. We enjoy our tea with our picnic, being a couple having fun.

Steam hisses as we put out the fire, and I want to go deeper into the cave. Holding hands is a good idea as the deeper we go, the darker and colder it gets.

“Ouch!” “What happened?” Adrien asks. “I hurt my hand on a rock,” I whimper. “Here.” Even if this blackness I feel his lips kiss it better. And then I hear a soft sound. “Did you hear that?” I ask, clutching Adrien’s hand. It’s not a scary sound, happy and familiar.

“No, I didn’t hear a thing, Princess.” A wave of disappoint crashes through me, though I’m not sure why. We keep moving, and I hear the sound again. “What does it sound like?” Adrien asks. “Laughter,” I answer.

Then, like a trance, I have to find the source of the laughter, and I let go of Adrien's hand, and head quickly towards the sound. "Princess! Princess!"

It's like I can't hear him anymore, all I can hear is musical laughter, and a bright light catches my eye. A hand snakes around my stomach, holding me back. "Marinette, what do you think you're doing?!"

My eyes are now well adjusted to the darkness and see Claw's green eyes glowing angrily at me in the darkness. "Claw, we have to go to the light!" "This is just one of the Supreme's tricks."

The bright light begins to fade away and I struggle in his grasp. "Claw, please!" Too late, the light is gone. But there's to still hope, a pool is shimmering, calling to me. "Claw, he wouldn't send us something evil, and this is happy!"

Claw's voice is wary. "Princess, he'd do anything to ensnare us forever." I yank my hand away from his. "I know what I'm seeing." Claw bows his head. "So be it. But I'll be by your side."

The pool is dark and shimmering, and I can feel my heart beating fast. What if I'm wrong, and Claw is right? Only one way to find out the truth.

Holding hands, we plunge into the water, full of colors of turquoise and aquamarine. I kick towards the surface, and Claw helps me to the bank.

I stand up slowly, dripping wet. "You okay?" Claw asks. "Yeah. Just cold."

Going in search of warm dry clothes, we begin to crest the hill, and I stop suddenly. "What is it?"

"Adrien, that's my village. We're back home." "So, the pool was a portal?" I nod. "But why would it take me back here?" "There's bound to be someone who has answers. Come on."

My village is just as I remembered it, small but filled with the hustle and bustle of the market. I wonder if anyone has moved into our old house. I'm surprised when my house is empty, like we just put it up for sale.

"This way," I gesture to Cat, leading him to the back door. The key is under the flowerpot, as always. Heart pounding in my chest, I unlock the front door, stepping into my former home.

No one's here but us, and I head to my old room, seeing my last project before I moved. Wait, no. It's a picture of my childhood. Have we gone back in time?

The Supreme stepped out of his hiding place behind the rock in the cave, smiling. “I have you right where I want you, Marinette. Back where you belong.”

Day 22-Childhood

Chapter Summary

> Marinette must outsmart the Supreme to get home from Paris, but there are more lessons from her childhood that can be learned.

"It's like I've gone back to my childhood," I turn to Claw, then walk over to the mirror. "But it's clear I'm still eighteen."

But Claw is staring at my easel, like he hasn't heard a word I said. "You liked black cats and ladybugs, even back then?" The drawing is simple, a ladybug on a flower as a black cat looks at it, wanting to be friends. "I don't remember painting this, but it doesn't mean I didn't, and yes. I told you; ladybugs bring good luck." Claw looks a bit disgruntled. "While black cats only bring bad. Daggers In."

I roll my eyes. "Hey, I don't think like that." he smiles at me. "Maybe I'm just hungry." My stomach rumbles. "I've hungry too. Let's go into the village for dinner. The Red Dragon has the best Chinese food you'll ever eat."

We walk into the place, holding hands and right off the bat, we can see the place is bustling. "Marinette?" A voice calls over to me. I turn, finding Ara running towards me. "Ara!" I hug her tightly. I used to help her in the kitchens, rolling dumplings, dishes, whatever she needed me to be so I could earn money for school and supplies, and in the process, we've became good friends.

"What are you doing back here? I thought you settled into your new life in Paris?" I softly nudge Adrien to let me do the talking. "Just back for a visit, plus I brought a friend. Ara, this is Adrien." She grins at me. "You've picked a cute one. Come on, I'll find you a table."

It's hard to know what to choose from the menu, but I want the fried rice and egg rolls. Maybe I'll even get dessert. "Do you know…" my voice dies in my throat as I find Adrien staring at me, chin propped in his hands, smiling, like I'm the most fascinating girl on the planet. "What?" I blush, trying to hide behind my menu.

“So, I’m a friend, hm?” “Oh, stop it,” I lightly swat his hand, blushing. “It’s not like I can tell people my soulmate, I’d scare them off.” Our eyes lock, and I can’t breathe right as I get sucked into those eyes.

“What will it be?” Our server interrupts our staring contest, and I blush even more profusely, causing Adrien to chuckle beneath his breath. “I’ll have a Nailaio,” I smile up at our server. “I’ll have the same.” We order our food as well, and Adrien takes my hands in his, stroking my hands with his thumb.

“Been awhile since we’ve been on a proper date, Marinette.” “Yeah, it has, hasn’t it?” I have to take a deep breath. “I wished we would have been friends, back when I lived here. It’s not easy being a only child.” Again, he chuckles softly. “Did you forget, I’m one too? What did you do for fun, what was school like here?”

For being a shy girl, once our food comes, the words come easily, like I’ve been dating for longer than I have. And it feels so good, and I learn more about him too, finding he knows Madrian. “I’ll teach you someday,” he promises, waving my hand as I take out my card. “Allow me.”

It’s dark out as we arrive home, and I feel like I’m floating on air as I unlock the door to the house, Adrien’s lips upon mine. But we have a problem: It’s not like he can stay with me tonight. “Don’t worry, I’ll find somewhere.” I give him one last kiss. “See you in the morning.”

I head into the kitchen for cocoa, and Tikki flies ahead of me, and I laugh. “Would you like a cup, too, little one?” Tikki nods, then turns serious. “Marinette, the Supreme trapped you in your childhood, like a fantasy world, hoping to temp you and Claw not to go back.”

Reality dawns on me, and reality is scary, a horror. “Was I under his influence, even if Claw tried to stop me?” Just as I finish speaking, we both hear a loud thump! Guess Claw’s going to sleep on the roof?

I groan, falling back into a chair. How could I be a complete idiot and the way I treated my partner? Unacceptable. And yet, he still treats me here with kindness and respect. What kind of girlfriend am I?!

Apparently, I say the last part out loud, and Tikki tries to reassure me. “The Supreme’s influence is very powerful, Marinette. Your not the first Ladybug nor Claw Noir to be

duped.” I peek through my fingers. “I just feel like a moron. I should go say sorry to Claw.” “He’ll be fine till morning. Now, how about that hot chocolate?”

In the morning, I think Claw gets cold as he raps on my door quite hard, and I’m still cozy on the couch. Oops. Flinging on my robe, I hope the door. He’s leaning on the door frame like he’s in a coffee commercial, and I’m the beautiful girlfriend to give it to him. “Just so you know,” I tell him as we walk inside. “Being that cute should be illegal.” “Sorry, I got cold.” I yawn. “Sorry.” “You want me to make….” He stops talking as I cuddle up to, wrapping my arms around his tummy. “Breakfast after cuddles.” A loud purr rumbles from his chest and I leap back. “You can purr?!” I shriek. Claw is unfazed, he just rolls his eyes. “That is one of my many traits,” he winks.

After cuddling a bit, I find we have no food in the house. “I’ll go to the market, see you soon!”

I make pancakes, humming to myself glad when he wraps his arms around me. I giggle. “You know, it’s hard to make you food when your being clingy.” “I just want nuzzles.” He turns my face towards his. “Princess, are you crying?”

And there they are. Betraying tears streak down my face. “I was so horrid to you, and you want nuzzles?” I sob. Claw laughs, a short laugh rubbing my back. “I’m sorry, I shouldn’t laugh, love. It wasn’t you, it was the Supreme.”

Anger sparks deep within me, and I want to slam my yo-yo into a wall. “Claw, how is doing this?” “As brave, beautiful and smart as you are, you're still a newly hatched Ladybug, and I am a foolish kitten.” I glare at him. “You're not foolish,” I turn back to the food, glad for the distraction. “He’s had centuries to hone his skills,” we look up at Tikki.

“You just have to outsmart him.” I close my eyes, my mind wandering down to the wishing well. And suddenly I know how to get home, but first food.

“Come on, let’s go for a walk,” I tell him, after we clean up. Before we head out, I ask him to wait for me, and I carefully roll up my old drawing.

“So, where are we headed?” he asks, as he reaches for my hand. “The old wishing well. When I got up upset, I would always go there.”

“Princess, the water is shimmering. Did you….” I grin. “Yep. The Supreme thought he could trap me in my childhood, but I can leave through this childhood memory.” “Clever girl.” We kiss and he helps up onto the rim. “Down we go!”

We tumble into the water, hitting a hard surface with a bump! “Ouch,” I rub my head. “Where are we?” I look around, suddenly scrambling to my feet. “Claw, you need to go.” “Why, what’s wrong?” “We’ve landed in my dorm!”

Which is against school rules, and we could both be kicked out. Claw grins. “But if I’m here, I can take a look at that diary…”

“Touch it, and eat yo-yo,” I growl. But Claw isn’t listening as he twirls. “Dear Diary, did you see Adrien Agreste looking like a total hunk?”

I laugh. “Go, I’ll meet you outside,” I open the window, for cats do land on their feet. Magically, my drawing isn’t wet at all, a miracle. Claw hesitates. “Are you sure that’s safe, Princess?” The blood drains out of my face, and I sit down in my chair in a daze. “The Supreme. What if he’s just waiting for us to show up so he can attack?”

Claw kneels down, taking my hands. “Hey, I have plan. Gather a suitcase of things and we’ll meet by the garden wall at my signal. We’re going to hiding, Princess. You know that small room in Notre Dame? It can be our hideout.”

“Can you bring a hot plate and a coffee maker?” Claw laughs. Hey, if we get trapped, I’ll need coffee. “I’m pretty sure I can get your Starbucks, but better to be on the safe side.”

When Claw is gone, I pack my bag carefully, not knowing how long I’ll be in hiding. I guess if we wait for a destined amount of time, we’ll have to flush the Supreme out ourselves. I wonder if my Lucky Charm could make some kind of a tracker, or… I grab a bag full of tools and gadgets that I’ve tinkered around with in the past. Might as well put them to good use.

I jump nervously when Claw’s signal comes, and I transform, dropping out the window. Swiftly, we head towards Notre Dame, but I don’t see any signs of pursuit from the Supreme. “I haven’t been able to set everything up yet,” Claw says. “It’s okay. A small sleeping bag and pillow are more then often, and I help him to set up the small kitchen.

“You want take-out?” My stomach rumbles, and I didn’t realize how hungry I was. “Sounds good. I’ll scout us out a bathroom.”

I find a drainpipe away from the window, and it seems a perfect place for a cold shower. If my life ever returns to normal, I’ll never take home comforts for granted again.

Day 22-Childhood

Chapter Summary

> Marinette must outsmart the Supreme to get home from Paris, but there are more lessons from her childhood that can be learned.

"It's like I've gone back to my childhood," I turn to Claw, then walk over to the mirror. "But it's clear I'm still eighteen."

But Claw is staring at my easel, like he hasn't heard a word I said. "You liked black cats and ladybugs, even back then?" The drawing is simple, a ladybug on a flower as a black cat looks at it, wanting to be friends. "I don't remember painting this, but it doesn't mean I didn't, and yes. I told you; ladybugs bring good luck." Claw looks a bit disgruntled. "While black cats only bring bad. Daggers In."

I roll my eyes. "Hey, I don't think like that." he smiles at me. "Maybe I'm just hungry." My stomach rumbles. "I've hungry too. Let's go into the village for dinner. The Red Dragon has the best Chinese food you'll ever eat."

We walk into the place, holding hands and right off the bat, we can see the place is bustling. "Marinette?" A voice calls over to me. I turn, finding Ara running towards me. "Ara!" I hug her tightly. I used to help her in the kitchens, rolling dumplings, dishes, whatever she needed me to be so I could earn money for school and supplies, and in the process, we've became good friends.

"What are you doing back here? I thought you settled into your new life in Paris?" I softly nudge Adrien to let me do the talking. "Just back for a visit, plus I brought a friend. Ara, this is Adrien." She grins at me. "You've picked a cute one. Come on, I'll find you a table."

It's hard to know what to choose from the menu, but I want the fried rice and egg rolls. Maybe I'll even get dessert. "Do you know…" my voice dies in my throat as I find Adrien staring at me, chin propped in his hands, smiling, like I'm the most fascinating girl on the planet. "What?" I blush, trying to hide behind my menu.

“So, I’m a friend, hm?” “Oh, stop it,” I lightly swat his hand, blushing. “It’s not like I can tell people my soulmate, I’d scare them off.” Our eyes lock, and I can’t breathe right as I get sucked into those eyes.

“What will it be?” Our server interrupts our staring contest, and I blush even more profusely, causing Adrien to chuckle beneath his breath. “I’ll have a Nailaio,” I smile up at our server. “I’ll have the same.” We order our food as well, and Adrien takes my hands in his, stroking my hands with his thumb.

“Been awhile since we’ve been on a proper date, Marinette.” “Yeah, it has, hasn’t it?” I have to take a deep breath. “I wished we would have been friends, back when I lived here. It’s not easy being a only child.” Again, he chuckles softly. “Did you forget, I’m one too? What did you do for fun, what was school like here?”

For being a shy girl, once our food comes, the words come easily, like I’ve been dating for longer than I have. And it feels so good, and I learn more about him too, finding he knows Madrian. “I’ll teach you someday,” he promises, waving my hand as I take out my card. “Allow me.”

It’s dark out as we arrive home, and I feel like I’m floating on air as I unlock the door to the house, Adrien’s lips upon mine. But we have a problem: It’s not like he can stay with me tonight. “Don’t worry, I’ll find somewhere.” I give him one last kiss. “See you in the morning.”

I head into the kitchen for cocoa, and Tikki flies ahead of me, and I laugh. “Would you like a cup, too, little one?” Tikki nods, then turns serious. “Marinette, the Supreme trapped you in your childhood, like a fantasy world, hoping to temp you and Claw not to go back.”

Reality dawns on me, and reality is scary, a horror. “Was I under his influence, even if Claw tried to stop me?” Just as I finish speaking, we both hear a loud thump! Guess Claw’s going to sleep on the roof?

I groan, falling back into a chair. How could I be a complete idiot and the way I treated my partner? Unacceptable. And yet, he still treats me here with kindness and respect. What kind of girlfriend am I?!

Apparently, I say the last part out loud, and Tikki tries to reassure me. “The Supreme’s influence is very powerful, Marinette. Your not the first Ladybug nor Claw Noir to be

duped.” I peek through my fingers. “I just feel like a moron. I should go say sorry to Claw.” “He’ll be fine till morning. Now, how about that hot chocolate?”

In the morning, I think Claw gets cold as he raps on my door quite hard, and I’m still cozy on the couch. Oops. Flinging on my robe, I hope the door. He’s leaning on the door frame like he’s in a coffee commercial, and I’m the beautiful girlfriend to give it to him. “Just so you know,” I tell him as we walk inside. “Being that cute should be illegal.” “Sorry, I got cold.” I yawn. “Sorry.” “You want me to make….” He stops talking as I cuddle up to, wrapping my arms around his tummy. “Breakfast after cuddles.” A loud purr rumbles from his chest and I leap back. “You can purr?!” I shriek. Claw is unfazed, he just rolls his eyes. “That is one of my many traits,” he winks.

After cuddling a bit, I find we have no food in the house. “I’ll go to the market, see you soon!”

I make pancakes, humming to myself glad when he wraps his arms around me. I giggle. “You know, it’s hard to make you food when your being clingy.” “I just want nuzzles.” He turns my face towards his. “Princess, are you crying?”

And there they are. Betraying tears streak down my face. “I was so horrid to you, and you want nuzzles?” I sob. Claw laughs, a short laugh rubbing my back. “I’m sorry, I shouldn’t laugh, love. It wasn’t you, it was the Supreme.”

Anger sparks deep within me, and I want to slam my yo-yo into a wall. “Claw, how is doing this?” “As brave, beautiful and smart as you are, you're still a newly hatched Ladybug, and I am a foolish kitten.” I glare at him. “You're not foolish,” I turn back to the food, glad for the distraction. “He’s had centuries to hone his skills,” we look up at Tikki.

“You just have to outsmart him.” I close my eyes, my mind wandering down to the wishing well. And suddenly I know how to get home, but first food.

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Day 23-Investagtion

Chapter Summary

Claw and Toxinelle set up a stake-out in the secret room of Notre Dame, but will the heroes get restless?

“So, how come you're not just using a Lucky Charm? You can have the “butterfly” multiple, and presto! We’d have eyes all over Paris.” I use my chop sticks to pick up some fried rice and sigh. “Because love. The Supreme would expect me to use my powers. I know a homemade version would be less effective, but it’s the best option for now.” “And your sure you're okay missing classes? I know how hard you worked to get into the school.” My eyes blaze and flash but dim quickly. “My life is way more important, plus who knows how many lives could be at stake if he got his hands on the prize.”

“Marinette, couldn’t I go to school, and I could get your homework…” Claw’s voice trails off, as I look up at him and glare. “No, it’s way too risky.” Claw stares back at me, shrugging. “I’ll be back later,” he mutters, opening the window and climbing out.

I want to call him back, but I don’t. School was his freedom, and know I feel like I’m taking that away from him. Best I can do for the moment is let him cool is paws. “We’re do you think he is, Tikki?” I ask.

“Well, you last saw him in a cave in Tibet, but even without a Miraculous, he has the powers to go anywhere.” “So, are we just wasting our time?” Tikki flies down, touching my cheek. “Safety is never wasting time, Marinette.”

When Claw comes back, droplets of water are in his hair, and I guess it started raining. “The Supreme’s is just a pile of rubble now, after you Catayslmed it,” Claw informs me. “You went to the Supreme’s?!” I nearly shriek. “Claw, what we’re you thinking? He could have been lying in wait somewhere and….” my voice lowers and softens. “I can’t lose you.”

I feel a arm pulling me close. “I’m sorry, Marinette. Your right, if we do things, we do things together.” The world is tilting on its axis, and I’m so tired. “Things will look lighter in the morning. Goodnight, love.”

His goodnight kiss is like a dose of sleep medicine, and curling up in my bag, I don't wake till morning. However, waking on a hard surface despite my bag causing severe cramping in my neck.

"Rise and shine!" Claw sings, and I can barely turn my neck to look at him. "Ooh!" I groan. "Um, I brought coffee and breakfast, but that sounded serious," he sets the food aside and comes over, plopping down on my bag. "My neck is killing me!" "Here, I'll work on it," Claw soothes.

Settling in a comfortable position, Claw begins to work at my neck, loosening the muscles. "How was sleeping outside?" I ask. At least I didn't have to sleep in the rain. "Fine. Don't worry, I found shelter."

He finds a patch of skin to kiss, and I grow soft, despite my pain. I turn, facing him backed against the wall. "Thank you for bringing me breakfast," I say, and I then I give him a good long kiss. "Princess?" Claw finally mumbles. "Mm?" "Your coffee, breakfast?" I pull back and glare. "Who wants breakfast when we can kiss?" Claw laughs. "Okay, you got me, but I know you prefer hot coffee to cold."

We eat and I begin tinker, Claw watching in the corner. I glance up at him, finding those violet curious eyes staring at me. I blush. "Stop staring, I'm just working." "You can't help it, you turn every head in the room." I drop my tools. "What?" "Yep, turned every boy's head in biology including mine, and I'll I could think was boy is she cute." I want to hide, or melting would be ideal.

"And here I didn't know what you thought of me. All I could think was clumsy." Claw wiggles himself so he's right beside me. "I happen to like that type of girl, and I choose you."

So I don't start crying, I ask if he can hand me my tool pouch. My drone is looking more and more butterfly-like, and Claw is looking impressed. "Where did you learn how to do this anyway?"

"Back in China, in Arts And Technology class. I was the fashion girl, while most others we're modeling. But there was one nice boy in my class. Max." Claw gives a mock gasp, covering his mouth with his hand. "There was a boy?" I laugh. "Jealous?" Two dark spots stain my boyfriend's cheeks. "Just as protective fur ball."

“Max was into three things: Math, robots and things that light up. Me being a designer we got paired up a lot, and oh, he loves video games. He could have this flying in no time flat.”

“What’s he doing now?” “Good question. Let me Google him.” Claw rests his head on my shoulder as I tap away, his breathing distracting me, tickling my ear. “I don’t believe it! He’s here, in Paris for a show!”

Claw plays with tail. “If you get a hold of him, should I be worried?” I take his cheek with my palm. “No, you’ll always be my Kitty and partner, the one I love forever and the rest of my life.” I kiss him, then find Max’s number.

“I’m going to call him so shush!” I hold the phone to my ear. To my delight, my friend picks up and I tell him all about our project. “An hour at Starbucks? I’ll be there with my boyfriend. I can’t wait to see you.”

A soft clearing of Claw’s throat makes me look up as I end the call. “Princess, aren’t you forgetting something?” “No…” I shake my head, a confused look on my face. “We’re supposed to be hiding. But, your fashion forward boyfriend knows exactly what to do. Wait here.”

“No, Adrien, tell me the plan…” Slam! The window shuts in his excitement. “First.”

When Adrien returns, he hands me a bag of clothes. “Don’t I already look nice?” I ask. “If we’re going to be hiding, these clothes are just thing.” I rummage through the bag. “I don’t know, these are little big, but they are your clothes.” “Just change into them, and I’ll help with the rest.”

A half hour later, Adrien and I hold hands as we stroll down the sidewalk. I’m wearing pink heart-shaped shades, so no one will see my eyes. However, my world has turned very pink, and I’m not sure how I feel about it.

“You still look cute, the agency I worked for would hire you in a heartbeat,” Adrien helps me walk so I don’t trip. “Yeah, tips and tricks at what not to wear?” I joke. I think modeling could be fun, with the right set of people, but my heart beats fast, thinking of all those eyes. Why, oh why, do I think facing the Supreme will be easier then cat walking?

“Marinette, we’re here.” “Max!” I call, seeing him typing furiously away on his phone. “Marinette, is that you?” He hugs me. “You look different then the last time I saw you.”

“Undercover mission.” His eyes widen. “What are they teaching you at that school?” “Plenty, but I need your help with a tracking drone.”

“I’ll get the drinks, you find a table,” Adrien says. Max pushes up his glasses as I lead him to a quiet corner. “A tracking drone? Most fascinating.” “I call it the Butterfly Tracker,” I show him. “It needs work, but I’m impressed by your skills.” I shrug. “Hey, I had a good teacher.”

It’s Max’s turn to tinker as we catch up on life, our careers, or soon-to-be-careers. The thought of motherhood pops back into my mind. What do I want from life?

“Would you like to come to the show, Marinette? I think I could pull a few strings and maybe even have you in the show. It’s a nature theme, and my design the lighting bug.” Okay, it’s not a ladybug, but that’s fine. Might as well dip my feet in the water. “I could even get Adrien in the front row.”

Adrien nudges me. The Supreme’s chances of showing up are slim, and when will I get another opportunity like this? Ignoring Adrien’s warning looks, I hold out my hand. “I’m in.”

“Excellent. Where shall I have the driver pick you up…?” “Here!” I chirp, a little to loudly. “Here’s fine.” It’s not like he can pick me up at the Notre Dame’s little room, and me staying in there is illegal on so many levels. Finalizing our plans, we shake hands.

“Oh, your drone is good to go,” he smiles. After Max leaves, Adrien grabs my arm. “Marinette, we need to talk,” his eyes are dark and glittering. “Sure.” “Privately.” His voice is a hiss. Uh-oh.

Finding a quiet alley, Adrien whirls on me. “Has the chance of fame and glory gone to your head? The Supreme can be anywhere, and in that crowd of people, I can’t transform or use my cataclysm?”

Annoyance is like a poking needle you push and push away, but it always pokes more. “He’s not going to be there, and this is my shot!”

“Fine!” Adrien yells. He takes the drone from me. “But I won’t be there to protect you!” He stalks off, disappearing into the night.

“Adrien! Adrien!” In this walled area, my own voice just bounces back at me, and the sighing moan of the wind.

I have a credit card and I find the nearest coziest looking hotel,and I check in. Does Adrien not want to outshine him or something?

Groaning, as I make my way up the living I text Max.

Marinette: Change of location, can you pick me up at the Four Seasons?
Max: Girl, you've moved up in the world.

No, it's Adrien's card. Adrien. It feels like someone has slashed my heart with their claws, and I stumble into my hotel room, I begin to sob.

What have I done?

Day 24-Famous Friends

Chapter Summary

Marinette attends a prestigious fashion show, but has she made the right choice?

When I wake in the morning, I feel pale, crumpled up and red-eyed. Which is not good for a ladybug or a designer about to be in her first major show ever.

I check my phone, sighing as I set it back on my dresser. “Any messages?” Tikki asks, her blue eyes looking concerned. “Nope. Looks like your my only friend right now.” Tikki flies up, settling on my chest. “I’ll always be your friend, Marinette. And you’ll get through this.”

It feels like my heart is a large empty chasm where love and joy once reigned in my heart. It’s a dark feeling, one I hate, but it’s my fault, and I must suffer.

I shower with Tikki happily playing in the shower droplets, and somehow scrubbing my hair with my favorite shampoo of Berries and Creme calms me. Pink and warm, I step out onto the blow-dryer. I comb my hair, leaving it mostly loose as a professional will be working on it later. A ding on my phone nearly sends me crashing to the floor, but it’s just Max, asking me for breakfast.

My fingers hesitate as I stare at the message on my keyboard, Tikki on my shoulder. “You think it’s just breakfast, right? Not a date?” “He saw you with Adrien, but if you feel uncomfortable, say no.”

Part of me wants to hide away, the other wants to distract herself. “I’m going to say yes.”

We meet at a small pancake place, and the atmosphere is warm and sweet, with the sound of hotcakes sizzling on the griddle.

“So, your graduating soon, yes?” Max asks. Oof. When was the last time I attended classes, and how have I not been kicked out of school? “My life’s kinda complicated right now. But yes, I hope to graduate eventually.” Tears fill my eyes, and I dab them on a napkin. Can I pretend I choked on my pancakes? “Marinette, you look like your carrying the weight of the world,” Max says softly. I take a deep breath. “That’s because I am.”

And the truth comes out, and it feels so good to finally, finally tell someone my secrets. “And you and Adrien don’t know the whereabouts of this Supreme?” Max asks. I nod, pouring boysenberry syrup on my pancakes. “Yes, that’s why I needed your help with the tracker. Adrien has it now, and we had a horrid fight last night and it’s my fault. If I wouldn’t been so selfish…”

“No, it’s my fault. If I hadn’t asked, you wouldn’t be in this predicament. But you should be able to live your life, Marinette.” “Adrien’s protective of me, especially after his mother disappeared,” I explain. That’s one story I am keeping secret. “He just doesn’t want me to get hurt.” “Things will work out, even if there worse before there better.”

I cheer up a little after breakfast, and its fun meeting my makeup artist and hair stylists. The term “Princess” feels even more real as I’m carefully fitted into my dress. “But I thought I was supposed to be a lighting bug,” I ask, feeling disappointed.

“And you shall,” the wardrobe girl says. “Max?” Max walks into the room, flicking on switch on my dress, and I begin to literally glow. My raven black hair is in two perfect buns, my dress though will be the star of the show.

“They're going to love you,” Max whispers to me as we wait backstage. I’m glad he’s here, for my palms are already sweating. “I just hope I don’t trip onstage; I’m such a klutz.” “Become the firefly, Marinette.”

When it’s my turn, I rub my earrings for good luck, and step onto the step. My name isn’t Lady Luck for nothing. The lights dim as I enter the stage, and I’m glad the audience is temporarily hidden. However, they do let out a collective, “ooh!”

And I become the firefly on a summer night, warm and beautiful. Glowing brightly, I conquer the stage, until I turn back to go backstage. A figure entirely in black stares at me, and I stare back, transfixed.

Strange, though I can’t see his face, I am attracted to him as soon as I laid eyes on him. Slowly, I approach him, and we circle each other, like two fireflies, one light and one

darkness, like a dance on a midsummer's night's dream.

We circle each other onstage, the world expects for him, disappearing. But as soon as appears, he vanishes. Finding my way backstage, I search for him, but to no anvil. It wasn't the Supreme, this much I knew.

I find a small bathroom to cool my cheeks, thankful I'm in water-proof makeup. I can't ponder for long though, and as soon as I leave the stall, I'm whisked away to be changed and there's a car waiting for me to take me to a after party.

I'm delighted when I find myself in a ladybug dress, and my team tells me I'm glowing even brighter than I did when onstage.

At last, when the limo arrives, I can remove my invisible mask and have a good think. I've never felt such instant attraction to anyone besides Adrien, but I wish, no, long to see my stranger again.

Camera's flash and pop as I exit my car, and I smile as dazzling as I can. My heart still aches for Adrien, but for now I must put on a show. Questions are thrown at me once I arrive inside. "I attend the Paris School of Art and Design," I respond, feeling that ache flare once more.

Food and drink help, as I nibble on a plate of cheese and crackers, there's a dance somewhere around here, I can hear the music. I find myself in the throng, dancing to upbeat music, and feel myself relaxing.

There's a lull in the music, and everyone is looking towards the door, the crowds parting like water. He's here. The mysterious stranger in black, heading straight for me.

"May I have this dance?" he asks, his voice as warm and sweet as honey. I smile, placing my hand in his. "You may."

All eyes are on us as the music begins again, a spotlight trained on me and my new partner. "I feel like I've known you forever, though we just met," I tell him, looking up. "I feel the same, but looking at you, no one could forget such beauty." Surprise flits across my face. "You think I'm beautiful?" He nods. He twirls me, spinning me through the crowds, away.

A small balcony is where I catch my breath. A table with more food and drink is set up, and he hands me a sparkling apple juice. “Thank you,” I sip my juice gratefully, warm after the dance.

“Who are you behind the mask, what secrets do you have?” I ask. He steps close, so I can smell cologne. “The only secret I can reveal right now is...I’d like to kiss you.”

My head is spinning as I nod, and it feels so right. Do I have a love interest? Why aren’t I stopping this when I’m with Adrien? Oh, he left. His lips are so soft and sweet, like the nectar I drank in the Wish Garden. And I soon as I begin, I pull back.

“I’m sorry, my heart is already…” apples bloom on my cheeks. He tips my chin back with a gentle touch of a finger. “Taken?” “It was.” We stare at each other, and I wish I could see his eyes. “Could we dance some more?” I ask. He nods.

Adrien where are you?! Caught up in this enchanted spell, I feel a smile growing on my lips. I’m happy. And what’s what Adrien would want me to be.

Sitting down on a small bench, I begin to tell the Mysterious Man in Black all about me, my hopes my dreams. He smiles, standing.

“Maybe I could model for you?” he asks. I laugh. “Oh, so modest.” I tilt my head. “But I could see it working. Call me.” I slip him my card, and a kiss on the cheek.

Then I leave my mysterious handsome stranger, promising to meet him tomorrow morning.

Plink! Plonk! I sit up the next morning, tangled my sheets. “Is that rain?” I love the rain, but it may be hard to meet my new friend when it’s raining. Talk about a soggy hair day! “Marinette, I think you should come to your window,” Tikki says. “Why, what’s going on?” I fling on my bathroom and scurry out to the balcony, finding a clear blue sky, and the handsome stranger.

“You came to your window, My Lady. I wasn’t sure if I needed to serenade you with song.” I laugh. “Trust me, the singing would have gotten me out of bed, but depending on how good a singer you are, there may or may not have been a frying pan involved.” “Join me for coffee?”

“Give me five minutes,” I tell him, stumbling back into my room in my excitement. I put on one of my favorite pink off-the-shoulder tops, give my teeth a quick scrub and am skipping

downstairs.

“Good morning!” I literally skip into his arms, sighing happily when he gives me a hug. “Good morning, Marinette. I trust you slept well?” I flush, whispering in his ear. “I dreamed of you. But why won’t you take off your mask?” “All in good time,” he bends to give my hand a kiss.

Starbucks is busy and my new friend leads me out onto the small patio, and I take a long sip of my hazelnut latte. I look up to see him watching me as he unwraps a muffin. I smile shyly. “What?” “Where did your love of coffee come from?” Huh. Not even Adrien asked me that. “My mother drank it all the time in China, and I was always asking to taste it. Finally, she gave in and I haven’t looked back.” “There are so many things to learn about you,” he whispers, and for some unknown reason I squirm in my seat, for I hold lots of secrets.

Day 25-Love Interests

Chapter Summary

Marinette is a bit awestruck by the glamor of the fashion show, but that pales in comparison as she meets the Mysterious Man in Black.

“I-I need another drink,” I stammer, knowing caffeine is probably the last thing I need, but I need courage. When I return, my friend is playing with his straw. He stops though, staring into my eyes. “You have many secrets too, don’t you, Marinette?” I bow my head, nodding. “I feel like I’m not being completely honest with you. And once you lie, a trust, like a string is broken, never to be repaired again. So,” I stand up, determined.

A small private area is hidden the bushes, and I lead him to the enclosed area. “Tikki, come on out,” I open my purse and Tikki floats onto my shoulder. “This my Kwami, Tikki. She gives me my powers. Blots On.”

Breathe, Marinette, breathe. I still clench my fists as I continue. “I have magical powers, the power of creation. Yet, I need to find a antidote to heal my friend’s mother from poison, a power it seems I don’t possess.” And the tears come, hot and salty. What good are these powers if I can’t help and protect the ones I love? Some Ladybug I am.

I feel soft fingers brush my cheeks. “Or maybe your powers are just beginning to blossom,” the Mysterious Man in Black says. My head snaps up. “You mean, create a antidote? With using my powers?” “Oh, you have powers alright. As you bewitched me.” His lips find mine, and his lips are a anchor, a life raft in this churning boiling world. “Will you come help me?” I ask. He smiles, and I feel my heart speed up. “I know just the place.”

It’s a abandoned upper room, bigger than my room, but is devoid of furniture. “Lucky Charm!” I toss my yo-yo into the air, but again and again, I keep getting the same red and black syringe. “This is hopeless!” I groan. I can only create one object and need a antidote. “May I help?”

He places his hands on my shoulders, and I didn’t realize how tight they were until he massages them. “Think about what you what to happen, Toxinelle. What your desire is.”

His beautiful silken voice paints pictures in my ear, and I burrow into my imagination, imagining Adrien and I give Emile the antidote, her waking slowly, the poison leeching from her system. We celebrate with a kiss and a pound it, and she grabs us in a hug.

"Only focus on my voice, breathe. Create." His arms are around my waist, holding me snugly, firmly. "Lucky Charm," I grit through my teeth, sweat breaking out on my brow. I feel heavier, tied down, my powers are strengthening. Clatter! "Open your eyes," he tells me. I do, my eyes widening for now two objects lay on the ground, and this seems to be some kind of puzzle. "You seem to be my good luck charm," I giggle. "If we were public, you'd be my love interest." I look up at him, hands on his chest. "Where's the fun in that?" I flirt, and he tilts his head to the side, wanting to know more.

"Everyone loves a good mystery. Who is her lover? Why does he dress head to toe in black?" Black. Claw's colors, mixed with violet and green. A black hole is opening in my heart. I need my partner.

"Who are you, really? The world may think you a secret, but you can tell me," I bat my eyes. He smiles. "All in good time. Let's keep practicing."

My head buzzes at the end of the day as I wait for him to secure our supper, and I take him back to my secret room. I lay with my head in his lap, thoroughly spent and exhausted and I love how he strokes my hair.

"You're a brave girl, Marinette." I flip over, staring up at him. "I wish I could agree." "Even if Adrien isn't here right now, you're still doing what's right." I mean, that's more than I can say then the Supreme. In all of this, I forgot we were doing a stake-out for him, but I haven't seen a sighting anywhere.

I stand up on shaky legs. "I want to try my Lucky Charm, just one more time," I tell him. "Think. Breathe." "Lucky Charm!" even with my eyes shut, the bright flash is more brilliant then ever before. When I open my eyes, my mouth drops and dangles open. All the ingredients I need are scattered around the room. "I did it," I say aloud. "I did it!"

My friend bows, and slowly removes his mask, and I feel a shock run through my body. "Adrien?" My heart is thumping around in my chest. "It was you all along?" He grins with that grin I love so much. "Who else would be by our side? And besides," he winks at me. "We are supposed to be undercover."

The happy tears begin as he turns me, and I hug him, sobbing. “I’m so sorry,” I bury my face in his shirt. “Sh, sh. There now, we had a bit of a tiff, but in the end all worked out well.” “Especially once I make the antidote. Help me?” His smile is worth millions, but this smile is especially for me. “Just try and stop me.”

It’s nearly dark as we reach the gates of the Agreste mansion. “Father’s out a charity ball tonight, so we have the house to ourselves.” “Come on, we don’t have time to lose.” Adrien places a hand on my lips. “Did you hear something?” Fear is a cold feeling, my eyes darting around, searching in a sea of blackness. I shake my head silently. “Let’s go.”

In the elevator shaft, Adrien holds my hand. The antidote is a thick pasty green color, and in just a few minutes Emile may wake up.

The elevator comes to a stop with a gentle bump, the doors sliding open and we step out. “You thought you could hide from me,” a voice says. “Marinette, It’s the Supreme! Plagg, Daggers Out!” Transforming, we stand back-to-back, whirling our baton and yo-yo.

The Supreme steps out of the shadows, laughing. “You thought you could hide from me, while I hid from you? You know you won’t be able to defeat me.”

He’s blocking our path to get to Emile, and tears gather in my eyes. “Oh, is the clock running down, Toxinelle? Tick, tock.” “Let me through,” I growl, grinding my teeth, the world is shifting into a red color.

“Without the Miraculous, Adrien wouldn’t even be here, but you’ll pay for what you stole.” “The Miraculous are supposed to be used for the greater good, and you use them for evil, even pitting us against each other!”

“There’s a thought,” The Supreme strokes his beard. “Two lovers torn apart by evil, one desperately trying to save her love, while the other has destroyed the world.” Claw laughs a harsh laugh. “Sounds like a good fairy story.”

Before we can blink, the Supreme raises his arms, and I feel a swirling wind howling toward me. “Grab on to me!” Claw yells, and I grasp his hand, but it’s no good, as we’re yanked apart.

Two portals appear and I feel myself getting sucked in, blinding by a explosion of white light. “Adrien!” I yell, watching with abhor horror as his suit is slowly being leeched of color, the black leeching into white, his eyes now a ocean blue color, before disappearing completely.

And then I disappear too, falling in what seems like slow motion, the sky is a blue-white and I hit water, sinking like a stone. Water isn’t made for ladybugs, and I kick towards the surface.

Gasping for air when I surface, I take stock of my surroundings. Am I in a alternate timeline? For the Paris I just left is not the Paris now, everything destroyed.

A broken moon hangs in the sky as I tread water, and I wonder who could have done this. The water is beginning to numb me, so I kick out, swimming. I must find a building to rest on and take in my bearings.

Shivering, I crawl onto what seems to be a massive skyscraper laying half-submerged in the water, and I curl up into a small ball.

I feel frightened and alone, not to say confused. My body begins to shake, and I at last I can bear it no longer, I begin to cry. After my tears dry up, I hear a soft familiar voice, singing softly.

“Little Kitty on a roof,
all alone without his Lady.”

Claw! Claw’s here, and he isn’t alone. I stand on wobbly legs, making my way over to him. “Claw, you aren’t alone, I’m here.” My teeth chattered in the cold, and I feel like I could freeze solid. But when he turns, it’s not Claw Noir, but a pure white Cat.

“Claw? What happened? Where are we?” “M’lady!” He walks towards me, arms open and with a cry of joy I run into the safety of his arms. “We’re in Paris, love,” he strokes my hair. “But we weren’t able to save Paris,” his arms constrict, like boas, and I wiggle like a fish.

“Claw! Let go of me!” “You didn’t save my mother, so I destroyed the world,” his eyes are crazy looking, and I yank myself from his grasp.

“No, no, that’s not what happened! We still have a chance!” A hissing sound makes me go on red alert, and a bright ball of white light is growing in the space of Claw’s hands. A cataclysm, and it’s aimed straight at me!

“I don’t want to hurt you, Bugaboo, so get out of the way.” “What’s wrong with you?” I yell. “Snap out of it!”

And then I hurl myself into the water as the Cataclysm is flung. I sink down, down into depths. Oh, Claw, what has the Supreme done to you, my love?

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